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MR. MADAM

Mr Madam

Confessions
of a
Male Madam

by

Kenneth
Marlowe

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TO GERT AND NET

O, God, help us not to despise what we do not understand . . .

WILLIAM PENN

Why was I born?
Why am I living?
What do I get?
What am I giving?
Why do I want a thing I daren't hope for?
What can I hope for?
I wish I knew.

Why do I try to draw you near me?
Why do I cry?
You never hear me.
I'm a poor fool, but what can I do?
Why was I born?
To love you. . . .

Words and Music by JEROME KERN
and OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2ND

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INTRODUCTION

by

Dr. Leonard A. Lowag

MR. MARLOWE'S INTRIGUING BOOK, "Mister Madam" speaks dramatically to the condition of the individual who has been left too long without human understanding—the homosexual. Of all deviations, the most widespread and tragic is this love that dares not tell its name. Ancient Grecian history records stories of love between young males who raised this attachment above heterosexual relations. Although we tend today to place any sex activity not involving male and female outside the range of the norm, we see the Greeks had a different word for it. The interpretation of the word "normal" and its overwhelming misapplication in every phase of our modern existence is appalling indeed.

For a long time it was believed that homosexuality was a phenomenon confined to the human species alone, but in the observation of many experts it has been proven that such is not the case. Aristotle observed homosexual tendencies among certain pigeons and Hamilton has stated that certain male monkeys may pass through homosexual periods. Zuckerman has also noticed homosexual practices in baboons and chimpanzees and Steinbach has observed the same phenomenon in cockchafer (the European beetle) and Hirschfield in silkworms. In the human species, we find homosexuality dating back to the time of Egyptian prominence as a world power, in whose culture we find Horus and Set as homosexual deities.

When the sexual impulse is directed toward persons of the same sex, we are in the presence of an aberration variously known as "sexual inversion". Homosexuality is the best general term for all forms of the anomaly. It is the most clearly defined of all sexual deviations, for it presents an impulse which is completely and fundamentally transferred from the normal object to one which is normally outside the sphere of sexual desire, while at the same time possessing all of the attributes which in other respects appeal to human affection. The real invert has no wish to be different than he is and his intelligence is generally quite up to the average level if not above it. In the great majority of these persons, the inverted tendencies appear in early life, often at puberty or earlier. Science has argued for centuries the question: which is established first in the human being—the psyche or the soma—and, as a suitable answer has never been forthcoming, we are equally at a loss to know which tendency appears first in the homosexual—the emotional or the physical. The most established scientific theory is that the sex of the fetus does not develop before the third month and until then is bisexual. The actual sex of the child only begins to become apparent after that period, but it is fixed from the moment of conception. Nevertheless, on the scale of possibility, it could happen that the reproductive organs in the fetus become unbalanced in one direction or the other, and the result may be a physiological deviation from the norm. Much research has been done in this direction, but as yet no conclusive evidence has been established.

The psychoanalytic explanation of homosexuality is based on several factors, the two primary ones being the castration complex and the Oedipus complex. In the former, the boy fears sexual relationship with a female because she has no genital organ. He believes that if he places his penis inside this strange aperture it may be mysteriously spirited away and he will be left in the same castrated condition as she. In the case of pederasty (anal coitus) his fear does not exist, since he observes that the male also has a penis and this reassures him. In the Oedipus complex, a strong emotional attachment to the mother causes him to wish to behave as she does; or a severe and unjust father may have

caused the individual to fear becoming a man. The hostility toward the father is repressed because of guilt feelings, and the boy thus tends to show love for persons like the father.

The primary objection to homosexuality appears to be the one concerning procreation. The question is asked, "If all men were to become homosexuals, this would be the end of the human race." In my opinion, it would be just as plausible to say, "If all persons were sterile, humanity would cease to exist," and then attempt to abolish all of the spinsters and the sterile persons from the earth. We are aware of the fact that if mankind *en toto* was homosexual, unmarried or sterile, the human race would die out. But, with our reasoning minds, we know that because of the laws of percentage, it is scientifically impossible for mankind to be all of one thing. It is true that no answer has been forthcoming to free homosexuals from their own particular bondage. But, HOW CAN WE HELP OR ADVISE REGARDING THIS MATTER IF WE DO NOT EXPLORE AND SEARCH THE WORLD OF THE HOMOSEXUAL THROUGH KNOWLEDGE. So often it is the case that those who object the most strenuously are those who possess more latent tendencies and are using hostility as a shield to protect and hide themselves. It is to be hoped that the revealing nature of this story may serve to acquaint the average person with the deeper feelings within these individuals, and thus free the reader to objectively view the problem. It is to be expected that stricter legislation may be enacted in the future in this regard, and how is one to fairly judge in such a situation when he knows absolutely nothing of the matter. Seen through the eyes of Kenneth Marlowe, one is most able to look inside a world he may never otherwise view. TO DENY THE PRINTING OR THE READING OF ANY BOOK THAT MAY LIFT THE VEIL OF BIGOTRY, PREJUDICE AND HOSTILITY IS INDEED A HARKING BACK TO THE DAYS OF SUPERSTITION AND IGNORANCE.

In the pages to follow, the author gives his reader a clear introduction to the problem of homosexuality. We can clearly see by this autobiography how the invert is torn between the need

to conform to society and the desire to live within a world of his own making, and in reliving the author's homosexual experiences, one is able to come to grips with the needs and problems in this stratum of life. In the course of the telling, the reader encounters the interesting life story of the author, and aside from the informative character of the narrative, is caught up in the fascinating revelation of one man's experiences and the strange way in which the pattern of his life proceeds. It is interesting to note the personality structure of Kenneth Marlowe. Although he is a homosexual from boyhood as a result of psychological factors, and maintains this design of behavior throughout a degrading sort of life, he is filled from time to time with the desire to turn from his link with the obscene, and even to surpass the normal level by humanitarian and religious efforts. His ambivalent nature never allows him to maintain this lofty plane for very long, and the tentacles from his past keep reaching out to draw him back. Basically this is the story of one in search of himself. His enterprising and resourceful nature leads him into many strange paths, but he will stop at nothing to continue his search. It is on this pivot that the story hinges as the reader is lead through the byways of life with Kenny Marlowe.

Kinsey tells us that there are between a quarter and a half of all males who have demonstrated their capacity to respond to homosexual stimuli. Marlowe is but one of this number, but in his pathetic story, one feels the consensus of the entire group. Every combination of homosexuality is reviewed for the reader, along with the author's most intimate emotions toward these situations. Perhaps he had in mind an expose that would be useful for men in all walks of life, whose duty only occasionally requires them to deal with problems of sexual deviation, and becoming convinced, offered this most important contribution to the general public for a better understanding of these deviating tendencies which have been a part of the human behavior pattern since our earliest records, and in fact, exist in some form in all men.

The great problem put before the sexologists who study the problems of homosexuality is to learn whether this phenomenon

is congenital or acquired. Until the time of Krafft-Ebing, the medical profession regarded it as an acquired habit, the result of either heterosexual excesses or overindulgence in masturbation. Since the publication of the works of Krafft-Ebing, however, it is known that homosexuality may be congenital, but it is still unknown as to what extent this may extend.

In closing, may I quote an extract from Plato, one of our most celebrated Greek philosophers, who states in one of his manuscripts:

“It is very unjust that homosexuals should be accused of immodesty, for it is not through lack of modesty that they act in this way; it is because they have a strong soul, manly courage, and a virile character, that they seek their own kind; and this is proved by the fact that with age they seem to be more efficient than the others as servants of the state. When they in turn become men, they love young men; and if they marry, if they have children, it is not because nature urges them to do so, but because the law forces them to do so. What they like is to spend their lives with each other in celibacy”.

* * *

DR. LEONARD A. LOWAG

A Word from T. C. Jones

WHERE DO YOU START when you tell somebody about the most bizarre character you know? I was rehearsing for the summer show at the Beige Room in San Francisco. It was shortly after the war and I had been doing clubs in the East. It was my first time in California and I hated it. It was so different from the way of life in the East. The people were so different. I was prepared *not* to like it.

And I knew no one in California except a few entertainers. I went to visit Gita Gilmore, one Sunday afternoon. We were both interested in collecting Chinese and Japanese glassware and crockery. Kenneth Marlowe was there. I mentioned that I couldn't find a decent hotel in North Beach.

I had been staying in a kind of retirement hotel, a block from the Club, and though it was convenient, I was unhappy. The hotel was mostly an old men's home and everyone looked like Sam Jaffe in "Lost Horizon." Gita said, "I just saw them putting a sign out across the street—APARTMENT—SEMIFURNISHED."

In the course of the conversation Ken said he too was looking for a place as he'd just recently arrived and hadn't made a permanent location for himself. The two of us went to look at the apartment.

The landlady said it was a two bedroom place and would be *convenient* to everything. And we went in to see it. It was several flights *down* from street level. "Subterranean" she called it.

You entered the apartment through a series of stairwells that

went down along the elevator shaft into the depths. When you came to the bottom you were inside our living room. It was all furnished in Early Nothing.

I don't want to go into our agreement to take the apartment because Ken goes into it at length in the book. I didn't particularly second-thought the matter because I was so in a turmoil about my living conditions that it didn't bother me being with a stranger. I'd known Gita and I thought if Ken was too far out he would have clued me in. I moved into the apartment that night and Ken moved in the following day.

Ken was employed days in beauty work and nights at the Beige Room so the place was mine all day. Our flock-schlock decor with the frayed Persian rugs and paisley wallpaper that never saw the light of day, at least in my bedroom, were discomforting to him. He decided to re-do it.

I was away all day at rehearsals and when I came back, I walked in and it was not to be believed. There had been a plate-rail around every room in the apartment and he'd taken it all down. But apparently it was what was holding the place together because without the plate-rail the walls seemed to be falling in. There was dust and debris over everything. I was expecting company, shortly, and the place was chaos. We pushed all the mess out of the side window, into a kind of upstairs (for us) courtyard.

The door to the kitchen had been taken off and my guests would have to walk past it to get to the "living room". But within minutes, between the two of us, we managed to make some semblance of order. That was my introduction to "Ken's Interior Decoration Service." But in time he brought in potted plants, toss pillows, paintings, throwrugs and towels.

And, eventually, I ended up doing some wall painting and the place resembled HOME.

What I learned was—Ken had an affinity for making things happen. NOW! RIGHT NOW!

To describe him is not easy for me because he's something right out of bedlam, at best. If he had ever gone into politics I'm sure he would have been our Secretary of Wild Life. Having

worked in Europe, the Orient and the States, as a comic and impersonator, I have encountered many off-beat and bizarre *poseurs*. But Ken can easily top any list I might compile. He's a joy to know, rather quixotic to live around, and a character at work being one.

Our apartment was so unique I thought of Ken as "My Brother, Eileen". The elevator was—well, right in the middle of our living room. And it was in constant use as our bathroom and shower were on the third floor-rear. And was *it* ever busy.

We later found out there were other tenants who had the same living facilities. They were *all* using this one, ancient bathroom. It was sort of communal property.

The bathroom shelves were a collector's dream, with silver Bobbi pins, an 1869 shaving mug, real bone hairpins (*huge*), and broken combs (from broken homes), scattered around. There were other things: Larkspur Lotion, carbolic acid, flesh talc and a box of Trojans with one round left.

When the door-buzzer rang you couldn't buzz them in, or anything, and we'd yell out the back window for them to "Wait!", and run up all those flights of stairs to get to the door before they were gone, halfway down the street.

Ken made pots of spaghetti like it was Little Italy. And people were always dropping by for eggs. We had apparently gained a reputation for scrambled eggs as the house specialty and all our friends were in and out for eggs, nearly daily—Connie, Bill—the Equity man, Gita Gilmore, Gene Burke, Ives Russo, Les Lee, everyone.

I opened at the Beige Room on Tuesday night and Ken joined the show on Thursday night. He came in as our featured (feathered) dancer, then doing semi-nudes. This may sound strange to readers who know little about nudes but many female impersonators, or femme-mimics, work *au naturel*—except for a gaff, a bra, body makeup, jewelry, and a wig (on their head). See! Semi-nude!!

Ken was as much a character backstage as he was at the apartment. He was then buying happy pills *by the sack* from Billy, the curtain man. He had a huge Whitman Sampler box filled with

his supplies: Bluebirds of Happiness, Yellow Birds of Happiness, Purple Hearts, and the White Birds of Paradise.

There were no toilets or washbowls—no plumbing—in the dressing room. We were doomed to live and work where there was no convenience of inside plumbing! We had our own Victorian thundermugs with our names on them, for emergencies. There were nine of us and the stage manager and the room was exactly large enough to accommodate three human beings provided all three were standing up.

Then we didn't see one another for years. One September I was starring in "Masque and Gown" at the Huntington Hartford, in Hollywood. He was making G-strings for strippers, and doing hair in a Hollywood mortuary, at this time. He wasn't working with Living Curl!

The years went by again and we met on another September and he informed me he was operating a male callhouse. That was the thing about Ken, you never allowed yourself surprise because he was the kind of person who, when he told you what he was currently involved in, you accepted it.

My wife and I were invited for Thanksgiving dinner, along with assorted guests ("a host of others") and he was constantly away from the table, answering the telephone and "making arrangements". And all I wanted to find out was whether or not we were having a hen or Tom turkey!

Many times people say to you, "You remind me of so-and-so" or, "I know someone like him!" This is *not* true about Ken. Fortunately, for those of us who know him, someone threw away the pattern when he was born. You'll find it hard to believe this unbelievable, fantastic lifestory but you'll get a glimpse of one of the most "out" characters who ever lived.

And, speaking of "making arrangements" above, I shall always be grateful to him for playing matchmaker. A dozen years ago Ken introduced me to my beloved wife, Connie.

Mr. T. C. Jones
Hollywood, California

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WHY?

LOVE ■ A LONELY WORD. I've spent a lifetime of being terribly lonely. But, ah, the front. I never admitted it to anyone. By cutting up, clowning around, being the main attraction, I surrounded myself with people, and who would have thought I was lonely? It was easy to keep people around me, keep them laughing. Surrounded by people and I was an island of want. Lonely?

When I started writing this I thought, WHY? I wondered just how much I could tell and how to say the truth without hurting other people. Well, the only way to write is to be honest.

Only a few names had to be changed to protect those people in my life who are non-professionals. All the places are real, and the incidents are factual. I found that, in the meaning of the limits of good taste, it was necessary to turn the burners down rather than stir the pot and enlarge anything. There wasn't an ounce of embellishment necessary. All I had to do was tell what and how it happened.

This then is the progression of my experiences. Some of it exciting, some of it fun, some of it sordid and seamy, and all of it honest. Regrets?

I always felt cheated in life for two reasons. Being a homosexual, there's the complex struggle to keep the sexual side hidden from friends and acquaintances so they'll accept you; and being cheated by love.

Because I never had an honest, lasting love, I searched throughout my life for fleeting moments of satisfaction. I grasped love where I found it—hustling, whoring, operating. Love was a big

dirty word, and I'm still looking, still searching.

When I was the most successful B-drink hustler in the business, it was because of loneliness. When I got someone to buy me a drink I thought they were doing it because they liked me. It meant an expression of affection, of love. If you spend money on me, you love me. It filled the minute, and I accepted that for love.

I know I'm sinful. Sometimes I feel bad about it. I don't always like what I do but the power in me has been strong and I never have bothered to control it. Sin and lust just got stronger through the years. To me, love was sin, and the more I wanted love, the more sinful it was in my mind.

I'd much rather be respected. I've never had real love or respect. But why cry about it? Respect demands understanding and if anyone didn't understand me, I just laughed it off with a "Who the hell cares!"

People hide things in their lives. A lot of people would have little respect due them if people knew more about them. But they choose to hide it better than I. I have been more blunt and honest.

Nobody bought me a drink, went to bed with me, or had me get them a bed partner who didn't make the approach to me. I didn't have to go out of my way to find people, partners, for anything. They came to me. Sure, I searched for love, understanding, respect, and all the decency of living, and I had a lot of help from the public—the people who constructed the steps of the ladder of my life. All I had to do was keep climbing, up and up and up.

And each rung may have been more degrading but there was always one more person ready to add another spoke on my upward climb. It was never necessary to force anybody to go to bed. But I always had a warm cover. Strange as it may seem, I am not the aggressive type. I have still to make the first overture for a sex experience.

How did I ever end up operating a male whore house then? Frankly, it was a challenge. It was something to do I hadn't done. It wasn't a matter of money. The rates were already established

by other madams. But while operating a *house* I was holding Court, every day. I was loved by the boys who worked for me. I was feared by the clients for what I knew about them. But I was the Queen Bee.

The notoriety of being a male madam and the whispers, the raised eyebrows, the expressions of surprise and shock, brought attention. It was another form in my search for love.

Homosexuality is not a convenience. It's a hell of a problem. Homosexuals are what they are because they have confused sex for love. The public degrades the homosexual because of this misconception—this eternal search for love.

Maybe love is understanding. Maybe, understanding is love?

Warm Regards
KENNETH MARLOWE
Los Angeles, Calif.

CHAPTER ONE

I Was a Problem

“ONE DAY IS like another,” I said. “Unusual? No, I have always regarded this place as a kind of Grand Central Station West.”

The comment was prompted by the sum total of everything happening. The phone was ringing, the maid was asking who wanted cream or sugar in his coffee, someone was knocking at the door, and I was trying to explain the *Service* on the other phone.

“Yes, he’s young, blond and blue-eyed,” I said into the phone, waving the maid to hurry the coffee to the five young men in the living room. “And I know he’ll take good care of you. That’s right, you pay him in cash.”

I hung up the receiver and went back into the living room. The young men were eyeing all the furnishings. It was elegant. It was me!

My lifesized portrait hung over one of the long champagne-coloured couches. Everything about the apartment reflected the elegance that money can buy.

One of the boys was seated on my white chaise-lounge. I put my five foot five down on the end of the chaise and said, “Move your footsies, Honey, Mother needs to park her tired ass.” It wasn’t that I’d been working it, but keeping a dozen young, beautiful boys working around the clock takes more than talent. I picked up one of the cups and sipped a Cafe Royale.

“You see, my dears, business and pleasure mix well enough when you’ve been knocking around as long as Mother has.” They were new tenants in the building and one of the neighbors

had called to ask if I wanted them over for coffee. They were wide-eyed. I loved it.

"There's no pay-off in this town," I told them frankly, "and that's quite a problem because you have to be really careful. But Mother's been extremely cautious. Lean over, sweetheart," I laughed, "so I can knock on wood."

I thought several of the boys could be callboy material but they were still a bit green around the gills. They said they wanted to work in offices and stores for a living and get weekly paychecks.

"All right," I nodded, "but if you ever need Mother, just call and let me know. I might be able to spot you. Pity you're not blond," I said to the pretty one. He *was* attractive, I realized. "My gentlemen callers seem to prefer blonds. But then there's always bleach."

One of them flapped an eyelid and said, "I'll bet you could teach us a few tricks." My God, had I ever heard *that* before?! Well, not in the last couple of minutes.

"Honey, you mean technique? If it's been thought of by *anyone*, I've done it. Yes, my boys have a type of routine technique, I guess. I mean I give them a certain amount of training. But they have to learn to take care of the customer's needs according to the moment. I don't suppose there's much I don't know about Sex. And there have been moments, sweetheart, when I thought I invented it! If I didn't, I bought the patents from my friend, Polly Adler."

They all laughed. But they didn't know how true it was. I'm thirty-six years old and I weigh the same poundage I have for the past twenty years. For nearly three decades I have been actively involved with the little three letter word. It's taken me all over the world, and believe me, at this point nothing could come as a surprise.

"Oh, it has its ups and downs. Right now everything's ups and Mother doesn't have to whore herself. And the money's rolling in. But I try not to think about tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll probably fall in *love* again and give it all up. I've been in love so many times I feel like Liz of the tabloids on a slow day."

One of them knotted his gorgeous, fair brow and asked, "How in the world do you get to be a Madam?"

"Like me, honey? Why, do you want to be a male Madam, too?" I did my deep sigh, stretched up the arm in front of me, draped the wrist to glance at my watch and smiled, "Honey, you got the time to listen to all that?"

Thanksgiving was over when I was born. And that was for sure the way I felt all my life. I was born at 4:10 on Friday morning. The day before, mother had made Thanksgiving dinner for eighteen people. The doctor who delivered me was a woman.

Mother wanted a girl. She had the name all picked out—Betty Lou. I was a problem. I was not a girl. Problems can be solved. So it didn't matter that I was born a boy. But that's what this is all about.

My half-brother, Peter, two years older, had been shipped off to live with our grandmother after mother's first divorce. I never really knew him very well until we were teenagers.

I was blond, blue-eyed, very fair. But in the beginning I was ugly. I was the homeliest baby any of my relatives had ever seen, baldheaded until I was nearly three years old. My mother kept a bonnet on my head to cover my baldness.

I didn't get off to a very auspicious start.

I was born in Des Moines, but we soon moved to the country, to a little town called Tipton, in Nebraska where all of my father's relatives lived.

When I was three my mother, one of my paternal aunts, and I were nearly asphyxiated. The gas fire underneath the water heater had gone out. Another aunt found us just in the nick of time and saved our lives. Neither of the two women had been aware of what was happening. My mother had been putting the throw rugs on the beds instead of blankets when my aunt discovered us. We were nearly goofy from the gas.

My toys were mainly dolls. My games were playing "house" and "store" with my cousin, Connie, and I liked to play jacks

and hopscotch. I had five cigar boxes of "Tillie, the Toiler" cut-out dolls—the biggest collection of any girl in our block. It wasn't very strange. From the minute I can remember I recall being called a sissy and when I was brought up in adult conversation they talked about how sissified I was. It didn't seem too important to me. It was a long time before I realized just what it meant, and by that time it didn't matter. I just knew that whenever anyone said anything about a sissy or being sissified they meant *me!*

In Tipton I had some cousins and a few neighborhood youngsters to play with. I loved it. Tipton was a small town and everyone was basically friendly and knew everyone. I was raised as an only child.

Grandfather had a trucking franchise and most of the relatives worked for him. He had 19 trucks. It was during the Depression and we were all poor. But then, everybody was poor. I didn't know we were poor. I thought everyone lived like we did. Our families in the relationship usually ate together.

One of the things I loved to do was dress up like *Mae West*. Connie and I would go into the attic at my Grandmother's and put on her old-fashioned dresses. Or I'd wear some of my mother's things. I'd stick a pillow on my chest, put one on my behind and then put the dress on, and with the hat and shoes, I'd go tromping around, announcing, "Look at me, I'm Mae West. Why don't you come up and see me sometime?" I'd swish in and out of the rooms and everybody laughed and thought it was very funny. Nobody tried to stop me. And I was *on*. To me it was a means of getting attention.

My parents were not affectionate people. They never kissed me, nor held me, nor hugged me. I never had a male relative, my father or uncles or cousins, ask me to do anything masculine with them. *Never*. So I played "house" with Connie and dolled up in my drags.

My grandmother and aunts taught me to crochet, hook and loom rugs, and embroider. Every female in the family contributed to making me a homosexual. And nobody did anything to direct me towards being a normal boy. We'd make doorstops out of

Sears-Roebuck catalogues or cloth covered, sand-filled tincans, and things that you could do in the Depression that didn't cost a lot of money.

Instead of being a buddy to my father I was a girl friend to my aunts. They taught me everything a lady should know. I felt comfortable with them. My father never asked me to do anything with *him*. I didn't expect him to be *close* to me, but I did expect enough attention for him to realize I had male genitals. Who knows, if he had only taken me hunting I might have become the Annie Oakley of Iowa!

Any discussion of sex was taboo. It was a nasty thing nice people never talked about. Even bad people never talked about things like that. Any mention of sex between a male and a female might have been possible if the bed had fallen in but *never* a word about what *could* happen in sex between two boys or two girls.

Parents don't want their boy to be a sissy but they don't really do anything about it. By calling attention to his *delicate ways* they only imprint it stronger in his mind. The boy is too young to know why he's a little bit different. The male parent won't accept awkwardness or femininity and shuns the child. Then is when the child needs psychiatric and patient, parental guidance. He doesn't have to be reminded he's a sissy, they've already convinced him of that.

American motherhood has fought sex education in schools because it was supposed to be something *they* could handle in the home. With teen-aged pregnancies and the growing rate of homosexuality they would do better to insist on sexual education "before Rome burns". And the education should come in schools where qualified teachers can and will do the job properly. That way *no* child continues the process of misguidance or no guidance at all.

My parents moved back to Des Moines when I was in the fourth grade and we lived in a house in the Oak Park section. They both went to work in a laundry. The house cost \$1800 and we made \$18 payments on it each month.

In Tipton I had my cousins and the neighborhood kids to play with. There weren't any children living near me at first when

we lived in Des Moines. I was lonely and afraid. I was even afraid of my schoolmates in the Oak Park school. Our house was five blocks from where I was born. I attended the same school my mother had.

During that year I made friends with a crippled boy who'd moved nearby. Once we were sitting in a double outhouse, playing with each other. It was fun. There was so much to wonder about. We wondered why they were different sizes and it was funny that they were different shapes. He said his father had hair there and we couldn't figure out why we didn't have hair too. It was exploration rather than doing anything wrong.

Each summer after that I'd go back to stay with one of my aunts in Tipton. Aunt Mary continued to call me sissified. But I helped on the trucks.

We used to unload the train, by contract. There were all kinds of things to haul like sawdust and caskets, and always—the mail. It didn't seem unusual. It meant money, and we needed money.

One day my Aunt and I did the "route" because my uncle was sick. We went to the depot to get a load of caskets for the funeral home. As I was short, skinny, and frail, between the two of us, we were having a hard time of it. One of the heavy boxes got out of control and split open when it crashed but we got it inside without the casket being too damaged.

One night Aunt Viola was preparing dinner for company and I had to stay and help her with the preparations but she sent me on to grandmother's just before they were ready to eat. I wanted to know what they were going to have and she said it was mountain oysters. "I can't go to Grandma's," I yelled. "You *know* I love seafood!"

That same summer I went to the woods and found a big black garter snake. I looped it around my neck like a string of pearls and paraded smartly into the house. Grandmother fainted dead away, but not before she screamed for me to "get that thing out of here".

Back home in Des Moines I dreaded returning to school. I was still lonely and afraid. My parents were always away at work. And when they were in the house they never communicated

with me. When they were around, my mother's relations were around and all they ~~did~~ was drink beer and play poker. That wasn't very interesting. They didn't pay any attention to me. I was left pretty well to shift for myself. I was just in the way. I sent for an Earl May's seed catalogue and planted a garden all over the backyard but it was a dismal failure. I bought a hundred baby chickens and put them in the basement to raise but that didn't last long either. And that too was a mess.

Father quit the laundry and began collecting garbage. I hated that. And in school when they'd make us write compositions about our fathers I'd always write that he was a G-man. I refused to put down garbage man. And to this day I have trouble spelling the word.

I wanted to join the Boy Scouts because some of the boys I knew in school were Boy Scouts. But I was too afraid to start, thinking I was too much of a sissy. I was afraid I wouldn't be very good at doing anything the other boys did as I'd never been taught the things they had. I couldn't even play baseball. And none would let me play with them because I couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. I wouldn't have been good at it if they had let me play. So, I forgot about the Boy Scouts. Well, not forgot exactly—forgot about *joining* them.

At home I had the housework to do. With both parents working, I was alone in the house most of the time. And when I was home alone I would put on mother's clothes and parade around in front of the mirrors. I could always walk around in her shoes because we were the same size. But I always had to have the goddamned potatoes peeled for supper before she came home from work.

I liked living with my relatives and with grandmother in Tipton. My grandmother had long, beautiful hair and she used to let me comb it for hours on end. There were other things I remember. When I was eleven, my Aunt Bernice was having club at her house. I got in one of the trucks at the top of the hill where grandmother lived and drove it down to my aunt's, but my legs weren't long enough to reach the brake. I'd asked my small cousin to ride with me but she ran ahead, instead, to tell

the ladies and they all came flying out. I was finally stopped when the truck hit and knocked down the outhouse.

Now, at home, all I wanted was love. Since I couldn't find it there I sought it elsewhere. I thought I would get it through my school friends. And I did. Only I didn't know it wasn't love. It was just sex. I found that nobody was my friend for any reason except sex. They didn't want me around for baseball or other games. They just wanted sex, but at that time it was a reasonable substitute.

It's kind of strange how I can remember so much of it. I can recall who they were and what they looked like and what they wanted. I can remember every one of them. And when I look back to those school days it's funny. I can never remember any of the girls I went to school with, only the boys. The boys left a lifetime impression.

By the fifth grade I'd met Warren. He had an operation and one day he showed me the scar. While he had his pants down he got a convenient erection. We played around. He liked it. We carried on until long after he married.

Then I started messing around with Tony, just to see who could come off first. There was nothing else, we just watched one another work up a good sweat. That is, until one day when Tony's mother sent him to the dentist. The dentist fellated him. Tony later took me to the office and the dentist played with the both of us. Tony also came to see me for sex until long after his marriage.

We were raised differently. Tony went hunting and fishing with his father. He played baseball with the other boys. He went dancing with the girls. He did all the things I never did. I was the only one with whom he was bi-sexual. I was the buddy he came to for sex—not for any other kind of relationship.

That's how it began. Soon there was Bill, Bob, Don, Paul, so many of them. And it was all the same thing. None of them asked me to join them at sports. They knew what I was good at.

It was no problem. And I was available. Had it been necessary, my intimate friends would have stuck up for me in a fight. I was

their *buddy*. The kind of buddy a hell of a lot of boys find. There are plenty of *me* around.

For them it was just "playing around". For me, it was the beginning of a career.

One evening I went downtown to the Strand Theatre. As I couldn't afford busfare, I walked home. After a while I became aware that the tall man walking behind me was following me. It intrigued me and I played his game. I'd walk fast and slow and glance back. He was Bernard, a 27-year old single man who lived in the neighborhood. Soon we were walking together, and he said, "Not much to do these nights. . . ."

Before I knew it, he had me in the bushes by Riverview Park. He was the first man to insist that I fellate him. The buddies I'd played around with were mostly kids my own age or just a little older. This one was nearly old enough to be my father. The dentist didn't have me do anything to him, but Bernard did. He taught me something new. And I liked it. I really liked it. I couldn't wait to see Warren and Tony to do it with them.

The next day, I did. The exhilaration within me was so great I could hardly sleep that night. They loved it and I found it brought us closer together.

Now they were at my house every time I turned around. I became very popular. For sex, anyway. But I didn't care. It made me feel so good. There was this feeling of love. There was an emotional relationship between me and other human beings. Someone wanted and needed me—even though the expression was wrong. I had never before experienced anything quite like this to make me feel that I was a part of something emotional, something that had to do with love.

I thought I was different. I suddenly had so much *Love* that it sent me reeling. Within a radius of eight blocks I was servicing about twenty boys. And I was the one who was active. They were only passive partners. It gave me a kind of power that I liked too.

Within a week Bernard called me again. He said he was a chef at a hotel. I went to his apartment that evening. We played around

a while and he told me I was going to get laid. He'd been fingering my buttocks and I was afraid—afraid it would hurt. I was scared stiff. Yet the sensation was marvelously strange. I began to like it. It was all very satisfying and I was willing to try anything.

My summers were still spent in Tipton but I lived a completely different life there. I fed the chickens and gathered the eggs. I helped with the trucking business and had friends and relatives around. There wasn't any need here for sex. I didn't spend as much time thinking about sex there as I did in Des Moines.

There was a CCC Camp outside of Tipton and an Indian reservation where we used to go to powwows. I would have liked to "comfort" the dull evenings for many of the CCC boys. But in a small town only windowshopping is permitted.

They would have been the only love-partners available. That is, besides my cousin who was eight years older than I. I loved staying at his house because I got to sleep with him in his bed. Whenever I got too close he'd push me away. I guess he caught on that I was trying to make him, but it never happened.

When I started eighth grade in Des Moines a boy named Bill forced me to fellate him. He wouldn't have had to because I was perfectly willing, but he had to show he was the aggressor, not I. Then he beat me up. It was his method of salving his conscience and making sure I wouldn't say anything about it to anyone. I was afraid to go to school the next day for fear he would beat me again. But he didn't. He just kept an eye on me whenever I glanced in his direction. It made me nervous for a few days. Then I forgot about it. I figured it was *his* loss.

Now I was back in the swing of things. I couldn't get enough. All my buddies had parlor-sized organs but I wasn't too aware I was becoming a size queen.

My step-brother, Peter, moved back with us and I was no longer alone in the house all day. And I had to plan for my sex companions to be in and out when he wasn't around with his own buddies who were in high school, all two or three years older than I.

Once when mother was going away, we decided to ask friends

to spend the night. We were roaming around half nude when I saw Merle, one of Peter's friends. Merle was well endowed.

Before long I was in my bed with one of my friends, a kid named Popeye. But he didn't appeal to me. After an hour of tossing and turning I got bold enough to tell him I couldn't sleep and would he mind changing places with Merle who'd gone to sleep in my brother's bed. Popeye sleepily got up and went into the next room, woke Merle and told him to trade places.

Merle wasn't in my bed two minutes before I was fellating him. It was his first experience. I thought he must have been massaging it with baby oil—it was the first one of which I ever liked the odor. It was big. I liked everything about Merle. He soon became one of my regulars.

It was a two or three times a week thing. He'd pick me up on his bike and go to the woods after school. Once he surprised me when he brought along a jar of Vaseline.

With most of these boys, I was the first, and probably the only, homosexual experience of their lives. I never had to worry about their cheating on me. They didn't know—or maybe, didn't trust—anyone else. They came to me for service. And I was always ready, willing and able.

Merle's parents worked too. I'd go to help him with the housework so that when it was done we could have sex. We didn't always go to the woods. When it was convenient we also used his house or mine.

One night my brother Peter and his friends were playing handball up the block. I came by, looking for Merle, and he saw me. There was an old, dilapidated car-heap in his backyard and I wanted him to meet me in the car. He immediately left the game and followed me, maybe four or five steps behind, leaving the others suspicious. But neither of us had noticed.

I'd searched the neighborhood and other than our usual places I couldn't find any vacant garages or "good" places, so I'd thought of using the old car. I got my pants off, Merle inserted himself. Just then the car door was pulled open. The whole gang had caught us. They razzed us something awful. Frightened, I

scrambled out the other door, pulling up my pants on the run. I ran home. I needn't have worried.

Within two weeks no one made fun of me. But everyone seemed to have hot pants. And I had them all.

I started a kind of informal "Buddy Club", but I was the only one doing the work. There were now over two dozen members in "my group". And I got particular! I'd call them in one at a time—whoever I happened to want at the minute. The choice was mine. I was in command of the situation. The "Queen" found she had a lot of very willing serfs.

I saw to it Merle was always around.

My neighborhood picture was changing. I didn't have to do kids my own age. I was getting all the high school crowd now. The house became a regular whore house and when it wasn't possible to take care of them there, I made sure there were other places. One evening it was difficult finding a place to take care of Warren, so we climbed up the fire escape to the roof of the school building. It was winter and there was snow on top. We went over to the air vent where it was warm. And Warren warmed me up.

Not too long afterwards I came down with the mumps. Peter did, too. We were home alone for two weeks. I was out of circulation all this time and I was concerned for my clientele. Peter and I decided to play house—I was always the mother.

By the time I started my freshman year in North High School my brother was a senior. I didn't mind high school but I hated physical education classes. I knew I would never be picked for participation on any team. I always tried to get out of gym classes. One way or another, I found excuses or I skipped. Seeing all those naked bodies in the showers was no help at all. It was exciting, but you couldn't do anything there. I liked studying all the baskets, though. I knew I couldn't hit a baseball but I did know I was a captain at indoor sports.

Then something strange happened. I met Dick, who liked me for *me*. I couldn't understand it. Everyone liked me for sex, but Dick was different. The others only wanted me around for sex,

Dick wanted me around for anything else but sex. He was just my friend.

I'd often gone roller skating alone when I was lonely. Once, at the rink, Dick came over to me. He was a good skater. As I was small and light he suggested we try a couple of tricks. These were not the "tricks" I was used to!

We tried a few and it was fun. We used to meet at the rink every Friday night. Once, when we were doing a trick, he dropped me on my head.

He invited me to his house and I couldn't understand why he was so different. He never tried to make me, but I wanted him. This set me back. It was a rejection and it bothered me. Why would anyone just want to be my friend?

There was only one boy in my block, up to this time, I never had. He was Wayne. He thought my kind of sex was bad. He was definitely a heterosexual. His family only lived there for about six months. But Wayne was different again from Dick; Wayne rejected me in a different way and for different reasons and this gave me a new complex. He was the only guy in the immediate area I couldn't make.

Actually, Dick never really knew I carried on with these boys in the neighborhood. At least, I didn't think so. But up till then he was my only genuine friend.

New people in high school frightened me. I hardly ever studied. I was too busy. I used to sit in class and think about all my "customers." And I had some peculiar ideas, too. For instance, I thought any unmarried man was automatically gay. And all married men were automatically heterosexual.

It was while pondering this thought I had my first affair with a married man. At least, with a man I knew was married. I had lunch at the corner hangout near the school and saw an older man of twenty-three. He was cruising me.

I cut classes and went to his place. There were women's things there. And after the affair, he told me never to come to the house unless invited, because his wife might be home. I was shocked!

This opened a new door for me. I didn't know you could make

married men. But I began seeing Bill regularly. I started cruising a theatre restroom I'd discovered by accident one evening. It was the Casino Theatre. I developed a clientele of other married men and soon learned to always carry a handkerchief.

My favorite high school class was Botany. Mostly because there were four people at each desk. We sat across from one another and I faced a treasure named Lincoln. One day Lincoln got the message. He had his shoe off and his foot was up in my crotch, playing maypole. I gained another customer.

When part of the family had been on relief during the Depression, we received Government staples, sugar, flour and raisins. We used to make wine out of the raisins. And even though Iowa was "dry", the family always managed to make enough to stay pretty well boozed. I kept cigarettes and my own liquor supply in my school locker. It was a handy business asset.

At this time, I met a girl named Lois. I didn't know then that she, too, was going to become a professional whore. Within two months of our friendship, we got kicked out of that school.

Saddle shoes and flannel shirts were one of the school fads. Lois and I had giddily cooked up a scheme to cause a little excitement.

She was slightly taller than I and had a huge set of boobs. We got passes and met in the hallway by our lockers. Exchanging shirts, we went back to class. The teacher never noticed, but there were titters and a build-up of whispering in the commercial geography class. When we reached the effect we'd wanted, we got passes again and met in the hallway.

Lois and I were changing shirts again, when the girls' advisor, Mrs. Wherley, suddenly appeared around a corner. I was in my undershirt and Lois was in her bra. She thought we had been carrying on and we started to laugh. Me, mostly, because I suddenly realized that I, after all, was a virgin, in that respect.

Our parents were called in to the superintendent of schools' office. It was decided we had to be separated to "end our affair". She was sent to East High and I to Roosevelt High.

Ever since our first meeting at school when we started to chum

around, she'd been aware I was gay. That Hallowe'en she agreed to loan me a drag outfit. This turned out to be my first *public* drag. At her house she helped me to make up. This was something I wasn't used to doing. When she finished, I looked in the mirror. I liked it. She took a long look at me and said, "I'll be goddamned!"

She was supposed to meet a sailor at a private key club, the Hawkeye. I tagged along. I was in the eleventh grade and no one had ever before seen me in drag. But I did very well. I picked up a sailor.

Lois had hers and I had mine. They decided to take us to a hotel room. Soon Lois was undressed and getting laid. But my date was disappointed when he found out I wasn't *all* woman. I told him it didn't make much difference; I would try to satisfy him, but he didn't go for the idea. So then I was the disappointed one.

I had to calm him down and called a girl to come over to the Rogers Hotel, but when she arrived she turned out to be a dud. We thought she'd be a good sport but she didn't like my drags and poured our whiskey down the toilet bowl before storming out.

I'd thought since she was from a poor family she'd put out. I thought all poor girls put out and rich girls waited for sex until they were married. I thought only the poor people had all the fun!

After that I wasn't very happy at school. I started to drag every Saturday night. One evening while riding a bus, looking for "business," I found Dad was driving alongside the bus. When the bus stopped at the corner he charged in, pulled me outside, and began to beat hell out of me. He slapped me silly. I knew people wondered why a grown man was beating up on a poor, innocent "girl".

We drove home. He didn't talk about it being wrong. He didn't mention sex to me. He wasn't too furious to shout, but it wasn't about sex. That was never mentioned. I was grounded for two weeks.

I stayed home and took care of my customers there.

Shortly after that he started cheating on my mother. Then one night he left, bag and baggage. Divorce followed.

During this period I started working, after school, as a bundle boy at the laundry to help out mother. In the summer I worked fulltime. Mother worked on the shirt line, one of my uncles worked as a wringer man and another uncle was the plant superintendent.

By the end of summer I was promoted to the drycleaning department. That's where I had my first affair with what I really considered an "older" man.

Mike was Italian and his body was covered with thick, black, bushy hair. He had a tremendous animal appeal to me. His brother owned one of the town's night clubs.

He was 36 and very masculine. I yearned for him and it didn't take much yearning. In conversation, I mentioned a couple of times that the jiggling of the morning bus ride always gave me an erection.

One day he invited me to see the house he owned. On the way he told me about his wife and children. But he said no one would be home at that hour. While riding to his home he asked if the car had the same effect as the morning busride.

"It must be the time of day," I replied.

We were barely inside the door when he started to undress me. He was the first person who ever undressed me for sex. Boy, did he work fast. Mike practically ripped the clothing off me. Then he threw me on the bed. I thought I knew a hell of a lot about sex but he knew a lot more. He was rough. I didn't enjoy sex with him. But he was well known, and because he was married I was fascinated. I felt it was a real conquest.

Then my life changed. I got religion.

The Church had open arms. There was friendship, there was fellowship. They thanked you for attending services. One didn't have to have sex with them to show love. Love was there without sex.

For the first time in my life I was made to feel wanted by a group of people. Society wants you to be a man because you are

born with the exterior of a male. From the minute the doctor slaps life into you in the delivery room, you are a man and God forbid you should do anything unmanly. Standards are set by society as to what constitutes manliness.

"Men" aren't supposed to cry, or embrace if they see one another after long time separations. Society gives the lesbian a much easier row to hoe. Little boys kiss Mommy goodnight but it's not proper to kiss Daddy goodnight. Well, could that give the child a complex about his Daddy not loving him?

Ordinarily, males sit around discussing how strong they are. Whether or not they can beat up the smaller guy down the street, or if they can sustain the sex act longer with a female than some other man. So the masculine homosexual cloaks his way through life without suspicion while some of the small, frail homosexuals, who give up the struggle to mask, turn to the church, for a refuge.

The church respects him as a man because his physical appearance is thus. And he finds refuge with them because he doesn't have to prove anything. He doesn't have to be vulgar, brutal, or aggressive to appear male, to be accepted.

He's not *different* in church.

Many homosexuals become good church members and work hard for the benefit of the congregation. Some even go into the ministry knowing that the strong drive within them may erupt. But they manage to sublimate these tendencies, some to the point of total abstinence.

Their self-disapproval causes many homosexuals to leave the environs of a religious atmosphere. They could be good workers for the church but feel their sin drive is too powerful and they can't accept the open arms of church friendship.

I was lonelier than ever because of the family situation, neglect, a seeking of love which I never really found, and a whole mess of guilt complexes which were building up inside me.

From time to time I would seek refuge in one church or another, sitting, wondering about the people who came and went. One evening I sat in church, listening to a minister preach a beautiful sermon.

I'd been invited to attend this particular church by a lady who was referred to as "Sister" Margaret. She was one of my co-workers at the laundry. I suddenly felt everything I was doing was wrong.

Boy, I got religion. Right then and there. I was saved and sanctified, and I felt like all the burdens of the world had fallen off my shoulders, I was going to give everything up. All of it—the smoking, drinking, cussing, telling dirty jokes. Yes, even the sex. *Especially* the sex!

The family never put up any fuss about my sex-filled, sin-filled life. We never discussed the enormity of my involvement and I never really knew just what portion of awareness was theirs. But the minute I *got* religion they all razzed me.

I couldn't understand why they'd fuss so much to keep me from being a Christian when they weren't concerned with my sex-life.

After the divorce mother drank a lot and one night, when I was dressed to attend one of the services, she forced me to drink a glass of whiskey before she'd let me out of the house. She even poured a half-full glass of it down my shirt so it would reek with the odor. It was my only clean shirt. But it didn't stop me. I went to church.

I went hog wild with religion, attending church every night, and three different services on Sundays, going to my own church and a couple of the others too. I was a new person. Temporarily.

My brother went into the Army because the war was on. One uncle and aunt were leaving for the West Coast to work in a defense plant. I was too much of a "burden" for my mother. So it was decided I would come out to the Coast with them.

Since I was such a problem they thought living with both my uncle and aunt would help me. I needed the influence of a *man* around the house, they felt, and it would help remove me from the clutches of the church.

I was to work to pay my costs and finish my schooling in California. My grandparents drove us out and we settled in Glendale.

We were in California a couple of days when I called up one

of the church "saints" I'd known in Des Moines. She asked me to attend a church to hear her minister. I took the subway from Glendale to downtown Los Angeles and waited there in the station for her. We attended church, had dinner, and then she dropped me off in front of Pershing Square so I could catch the subway home.

I heard gospel preaching and looked back over my shoulder. The Square was filled with scattered crowds listening to *sermons*, arguing politics and a lot of people just looking at each other. Soon I was in the middle of a group. I felt a hand on my thigh.

All of a sudden my religion went out the window. Here, right in the middle of the outside world, I learned there were *other* gay people, there were *other* queens around. Why, the place was loaded with *my* kind!

Sugar Daddy

I REALLY DIDN'T LIKE my job after graduation from high school in Glendale. I was a pan-stacker at the Dolly Madison Baking Company, stacking dirty baking pans and getting them ready for the automatic cleaning machine. Everyone wore white T-shirts and white pants. It was dull. Sterile, but dull.

My every thought, on and off the job, was Sex. Sex was taking up my whole life. I started playing hookey and going down to Pershing Square. It was like a magnet to me. I knew what was there. And there was so *much* of it. Sex became an obsession.

I knew a lot about Sex but I didn't know the vocabulary, the gay language. When one man asked, "You French?" I thought he meant my nationality! I didn't know what "brown" meant.

So I asked questions. But I never let on I was green. People always feel good "helping" you to learn things.

The young queens around Pershing Square wore make-up, camped and swished all over the place. The Square was always *packed*. I learned quickly to make dates by watching the other young queens.

Back home I was a novelty. Now, there was a hell of a lot of competition. You learn fast when you have to.

These young queens didn't have to work at a job as I was doing. They were there for only one reason, Sex. Hell, that was what *I* was there for!

All they needed was \$6 a week cash for a room. That was a necessity for keeping alive. The rest of the time they'd go to bed for a new shirt, a pair of trousers, or a dinner.

Finally, I was spending so much time at the Square, it didn't seem practical to go to the Dolly Madison Baking Company.

Somebody else could stack the dirty pans. Sex was much too time-consuming.

I began to run around with two other queens. One was Candy and the other was the Duchess. Soon I was referred to as "the Princess." Up to then the clients I had were *my* trade exclusively but now I had to compete with all the other faggots on the Square. I pulled out all the stops and let my hair down. The pins hit the concrete with such a *bang* it sounded like a string of Roman Candles on the 4th of July. I went hogwild.

When we'd meet in the mornings we screamed greetings with glee and compared notes. And try and get a date to take us to Clifton's for a meal. We loved Clifton's because we'd sit near the waterfall and listen to the roar of the water. And when you'd announce it was your birthday they always brought a cake to your table to celebrate. I was "born" at least once a month.

When ever you snagged a date for a meal, all the queens in the Square were aware of what was happening, as you shimmied off in the direction of Clifton's "on the arm" of your date. They'd all wave goodbye, shouting, "Get the strawberry pie. It's delicious today!" I can't believe I ever carried on so Nelly!

We tromped all over the downtown area, whenever things got too dull at the Square. And to Echo Park, MacArthur Park, and Angel's Flight. My legs got so tired—trotting up and down the steps to the T rooms! The old Jewish men sat on the park benches glaring, giving us vile looks. The Police didn't particularly care back in those years—up to a degree—so long as you weren't raping ten year old boys.

I continued living with my uncle and aunt in Glendale. My uncle was working at Lockheed days and playing piano at the Green Lantern Bar at night. Candy, the Duchess and I had spent a hectic day making everything in sight and by 10:30 it was time to go home. We were walking to the subway station when a Police Car drove up and stopped to check our ID. Then they packed us in the back seat and took us to the Georgia Street jail. Candy had a record of male prostitution a mile long and the Duchess had once been arrested for lewd vagrancy. There was *nothing* on the Princess—except my being underage, just 19.

"What are you doing with these two?" one of them asked.

With all the make-up I had on he was either blind or he was lousy at 20 Questions.

The Police called my aunt and told her I was running around with well-known homosexuals. Candy and the Duchess were released and I was driven home. I hated going there. She was waiting up for me, and said, "You are *not* going to bed yet. You're waiting until your uncle comes home and we're going to have this thing settled."

What was there to settle? I came to Los Angeles, frustrated from being different, never having had this kind of life explained to me, even after doing it for so long. I had developed a powerful desire to continue.

Their solution was, "You're getting on the bus and you're going back home to your mother. Hanging around with such characters—you *know* what they do!"

If she knew about it why hadn't she said something years ago. The family could have changed my life—guided my direction.

When I'd found other homosexuals I was happy to have "friends". I was relieved there were my kind of people around, and she called them characters. My *friends* accepted me.

There's an immediate acceptance by them. You've shared forbidden experiences, forbidden lusts. You have a kinship.

My uncle and aunt took me downtown to the Greyhound Depot. I glanced a "goodbye" in the direction of the T Room as they bought my ticket. Boarding the bus, I waved goodbye.

And got off in Pomona.

I cashed in my ticket and caught the next bus back to Pershing Square. There I met a new friend, Roger, and told him my whole, sad story over a piece of strawberry pie. That evening we were roommates. It was a matter of sharing a small room in a ramshackle building on Bunker Hill, just behind Angel's Flight. It was \$6 a week for the two of us.

The closet in the *apartment* was a wire with a piece of cloth in front of it. My family didn't hear from me for over a year.

I wanted to see my mother. I was afraid and embarrassed to

go home. I was afraid she would have heard from my Aunt. I wanted to hide, to disappear, And I did.

I never contacted any of them for over eighteen months. Not that I didn't want to. I was afraid of the consequences. I was sure, by now, everyone knew I had been exposed to the brink of Hell.

Up to now I lived for Sex. Now, Sex *had* to make a living for me.

It did.

I had the cash left from the refund of the ticket. It lasted for awhile. I bought lots of spaghetti supplies for the queens and we'd whip up a batch of it so we could all eat. We were terrible cooks. The money didn't last long.

Being too young to go to the gay bars and pick up dates, I spent most of my time in the Square. Now I had to really start hustling. Up to then I had been doing it because it was fun. Now it was another matter. Oh, I still managed to work in a few fun dates. I only hustled enough to keep alive. But I was really becoming more and more possessed by Sex. Unfortunately, the men who really appealed to me didn't have a dime.

Nights were better than the days. The darkness made you look sexier. One thing about it—during the daytime I got *lots* of healthy sunshine, sitting out on those park benches. But at night everybody seemed more in the mood.

At the Dolly Madison Baking Company we'd had meals and I always had plenty of cake to eat. But now it was usually "share the spaghetti" and when we couldn't get a Clifton dinner-date the queens would all chip in a quarter and we'd whip up another batch of spaghetti.

Occasionally, I would wander away from the Park. I'd go to the theatre johns, the department store johns, the bus depot johns and especially the subway station john. It was part of the "rounds" all of us made.

One never ended a day until *checking* out the T Room at the subway station. It had the most handwriting on the walls. More than any place else. "Show Hard—Get Blown." What do people look like who write all those things on walls?

The words on the walls were the only thing that kept up my reading, or cultural pursuits, in those days.

One person had written: "I have ten inches." And underneath this someone else had pencilled in: "Seemed more like twelve to me!"

Through the years I learned that there are certain types who sit in the Parks, others who go only to department store T rooms, many who go only to theatre T rooms, and still others who write on the walls. Only the very young try everything—all of it. In time the scope is narrowed.

Most of my world encompassed about five square blocks of territory around Pershing Square. I would have been able to walk my little world in my sleep, knowing it so well. I was like a captive, a prisoner. Only I didn't know it. And I didn't care.

Then one day Roger rolled me. He'd moved out when I was "on my rounds" and everything was gone. All of my clothes in the *apartment* were gone. I had nothing but the clothes I was wearing. My world was narrowed to the bone. I was wearing it. And I was broke.

I sat in the Square that Saturday evening feeling lonelier than I'd ever felt in my life. I'd had a lot of practice but this was bigger. What I really needed was a Sugar Daddy, I said to myself.

Then I wouldn't have to look for work. I wouldn't be tied down to monotony. I could pursue sex, sex, sex.

Sugar Daddies are the ultimate wish of the effeminate homosexuals. It is the status symbol and proves to other "queens" you've *arrived*. The Sugar Daddy satisfies the ego and proves one's ability to attract.

You have love but you don't make the conquest of securing a Sugar Daddy for love. He can and sometimes does satisfy the sexual need, but he provides the security against not having to be employed. He provides material things—an allowance and clothing—and these *show* his love for you. They show it not only to you, but to all the other homosexuals who can admire your status symbol, a Sugar Daddy of your own.

For many homosexuals it provides a pseudo father-son relation-

ship they've never had. The age difference brings a mental satisfaction to the physical relationship.

There was a large nondenominational church down the street. Services had just finished and some of the crowd came over to dispense the gospel. I noticed a very heavy-set man, with a moustache, receding hairline, very obese, with feet that obviously hurt when he walked. The buttons of his coat hardly came together around the front of his big belly. He sat across from me and looked at me for a long time. He moved heavily off the bench and hobbled over.

"Is someone sitting on this bench next to you?"

I looked to the left, then to the right. Seeing absolutely no one near, I shrugged.

So he sat down. I could feel the breeze his movement stirred up in the hot, night air. For the little shift of air, I was grateful.

"Beautiful evening," he stated.

"Yeah," I replied, wishing he would go away.

"Live here?"

"Yes."

"Near?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to have a cup of coffee?"

"I just had one," I lied.

"I'd certainly like to treat you," he continued.

I glanced at him again and finally said, "Oh, all right."

He was so unattractive, I could hardly stand looking at him. Worst of all, he had a throat twitch that bothered me at first. Then it disgusted me.

It was one of the first times I felt particularly conspicuous, sitting in the Square. I felt that everyone was looking at me and they knew we two were together. He was about sixty years old.

But I was on my own, broke, desperate, things looking pretty black around the edges. As Fate would have it, my circumstances at the moment gave me a wonderful "Line" to tell "Charley." But, would he believe it? He probably had heard it a hundred times, I was sure. But he listened.

Then he insisted I come with him to Long Beach and spend the weekend. He had a lovely place, *he said*, "by the beach."

Coffeetime turned out to be a decent meal and I insisted that I was too busy with "work" for the next week to be able to go with him but that I would meet him the following Saturday morning and spend the following weekend. I insisted that he meet me at the Square because that meant he would have to provide the transportation. I really wasn't even sure where Long Beach was.

I survived the week and he met me the following Saturday morning as he'd said. We took the Pacific Electric to Long Beach and had to walk eight blocks to his apartment. Him, on his aching arches.

The apartment, a flat in a six-unit building, was actually two blocks from the ocean—not on the beach. The entire furnishings were a dining room set, sofa, chair and a pull down bed. There were no curtains, lamps, rugs, or furniture in the bedroom. What was there looked like rejects from the Salvation Army.

Closing the door behind us he grabbed me and smothered me with a bearlike grip. I was looking up at ceiling wondering how the hell I let myself get roped into this. And how to get myself out.

I struggled out of the vise and backed off, trying to keep him at an arm's length. After all, being a teenager I had an attractive, if slightly effeminate, body and a nice, full-lipped face. Much as I needed ready cash I wasn't about to *waste* my youth on *him*. Charley was panting with anticipation. I was panting with perspiration brought on by desperation.

Things began to liven up just a little when he indicated he had a "present" on the dining room table. It was packages and boxes of clothing. He thoughtfully remembered my story about Roger cleaning me out. Living in the same clothing I had on for a week, the prospect of a few new rags brightened things considerably.

"For me?" I said with all the innocence of a con artist being judged actress of the year.

He wanted me to try them on—anything. There were shirts,

pants, underwear, a bathing suit, all kinds of things. Things were looking better all the time. But was it worth Charley?

This thought was paramount every time I glanced in his direction which was *rare*. All he really wanted with the "try something on" was to look at my body. Hell, I was hungry, as usual, so I modeled everything for his sexual appetite, while I wanted for mine.

He was going to show me a good time! He wined and dined me for the evening and bought me everything I saw and liked. Every couple of hours we stopped and ate. I had to keep him in public view to keep from being crushed to death.

And where the hell did we eat? In every goddammed cafeteria in Long Beach! He wouldn't go into a regular restaurant or a lunch counter. It had to be a cafeteria.

Well, I told myself, here you are—nineteen, and this is your first Sugar Daddy.

I finally figured out why we had to eat in cafeterias. He had to *see* all that food in front of him to select what he wanted. He couldn't *see* the food on the menu but here it was all laid out in view and he could grab to his heart's content. His manners at table were terrible. He made horrible noises when he ate, and he ate like a horse. He was, I decided, just a big fat, dirty old man. I didn't think I could take a whole weekend of him. I decided not to even try.

I began to make every kind of excuse why I had to get back to Los Angeles. I was still pushing him away every time I felt his hot breath as he wanted badly to kiss me with his ugly, fat mouth.

Finally I said, "If you don't let me go back to Los Angeles, I won't come back again!"

He said I could go if I'd meet him in the Square the following afternoon. He would have to come to Los Angeles to church and we'd meet at one o'clock.

I went home with all the new clothes.

Now, as I described him to the other queens, he wasn't nearly so ugly. I *couldn't* let them know what a dog I'd picked the night before. They encouraged me to lead him on.

"You won't have to hustle. Don't be a fool. You can still have all the fun and business you want when he goes to work!"

It began to sound like an easier way to exist.

When we met the first thing he said was that I shouldn't hang around the Square. "If you would come to live with me you could have your own bedroom, and I'd have a reason to fix the place up," he said.

I told him I was all alone in California, so listening to his "come live with me" began to sound more interesting.

"I'm so lonely," he bawled . . . "just be there when I come home nights."

Being a Sagittarian and blunt, I had told him about my whole life and all the sex participation including how I was once "saved." That cinched it. I had him.

He was the Sunday school superintendent for a very strict denomination. He wanted me more than ever then. Since I'd already been "saved" he was going to see to it that I continued on my way to salvation. I couldn't see how he was going to do it panting in my face and crushing me to death with those bear-hugs, but I reasoned that I would be able to "save" myself from his emotion if he could "save" me.

I went to church again on Sundays. It galled me because I thought we were both such hypocrites. He bought me a new suit so I had something to wear "to church." In fact, *church* meant a lot of new clothes. I said "goodbye" to all my "friends" and left the Square. I'd caught a *fish*. And besides, who knew how long Daddy would last. After all, I could be back in the Square in a week!

He kept slobbering over me, wanting to neck. I used the church for a crutch. I kept hitting him with my "crutch" by saying that this was all wrong and we couldn't carry on this way, and continue going to church. He had to be content just to *look*. He pleaded with me to let him watch me take a bath. "I'll just sit here on the stool and watch. I won't say *anything*."

"Goddammit! Not while *I'm* taking a bath, you *won't*," I yelled. He only got to see me at a distance. *Poor soul!* Who had who? I got a weekly allowance of \$30 and things became quite

livable. He bought curtains and a few things to brighten up the place. From time to time I bothered to put together something resembling a meal but mostly it was those damned cafeterias. And I had a lot of time on my hands. There was a lot of nothing to do inside the apartment and as long as I was "playing house" I couldn't see cleaning and bothering with the furniture that wasn't there.

Most of the time I spent at the beach. Soon, I was very popular with all the beach queens. I'd take my new tricks home in the daytime and conduct my business or we'd go to their apartments.

Exhausted from nymphomaniacal days, I retreated to virtuous evenings with Charley.

Once a sailor dropped by and Charley saw the uniformed doll as he was leaving the building for work.

"My God, honey," I exclaimed, "you're here so *early*! You didn't run into my Uncle Charley? He just left minutes ago!"

Sure enough, by the time we were in the bedroom with his blues off Charley was turning the key in the lock. Quickly, I threw open the closet door.

"Com'n! Get inside!!" I said as I shoved him in. He stood there in his white boxer shorts, grabbing for his uniform and shoes.

"It's Uncle Charley—quick!!"

Charley demanded to know if there was someone there with me. I never permitted him in my bedroom—that was *Off Limits*. I opened the door to assure him he was being ridiculous.

"Whatever do you mean, 'You have someone here.' I never heard anything so preposterous in all my life!"

He said, "I'm sorry."

"Well, you should be!"

He turned and left the apartment. I followed him to the front, watching out the window as he went down the street.

Fluttering back to the bedroom, I grandly opened the closet door.

"The coast's clear."

He looked half frightened and had already started to dress.

"This wouldn't have happened if you hadn't come so early. But it's alright now," I explained.

We then sailed through a few erotic waves.

An hour later, as I let him out the door, there was my Sugar Daddy sitting on the front step.

I thought the crops had failed.

He came inside and sat down and cried. We had a long talk and I told him I couldn't *stand* him. I had to get my Sex someplace and I wasn't about to get it from Uncle Charley *or* put up with his tears. I threatened to leave.

He didn't want that. "I'd rather have you here and know you're cheating! I won't let you go."

I agreed to stay on the condition he didn't try to touch me. I promised never to carry on with anyone again in that apartment, and I didn't. In *that* apartment.

At least, I told myself, it meant no chance of getting caught again.

That evening we "discussed" my *problem*. I needed something to occupy my time. He felt his failure with me was because of too much time on my hands. It was decided I would go to school and learn a career.

I went to a studio in Long Beach to study dancing. It didn't take long for me to decide there were no interesting dancing schools available in Long Beach. I suggested I would like to go to school in Los Angeles. I wanted a bigger school where there were more students. But I didn't go back to Pershing Square.

I made "the T-Room rounds" from time to time, just for old times sake, and I went to a dancing school in Hollywood.

The first one wasn't satisfactory. Then I went to the Marian Rondelli School. It was more *interesting*.

I studied character dancing and ballet. Later, tap dancing. I didn't want to get into showbusiness. I wasn't interested in that. I just wanted to have something to occupy my time. And I loved dancing.

Of course, there were all those muscular male ballet dancers at the school. This was what made it so interesting. The most interesting aspect of the school was the teacher's nephew, a curly headed blond boy named Burt Mailer.

All I had to do was see him in his tights and I knew I had to have him. I did.

He invited me over to his house. He lived with his aunt and she was gone. In his bedroom, done in an oriental motif, was a chest of drawers, wide at the top and narrower at the bottom, and a mattress on the floor. Nothing else. The chest was like something designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

We began on the floor. That's where the mattress was! But it wasn't very comfortable. He rolled up the mattress and draped me over it, on my stomach. Then he took me.

Burt never made himself available again after that and I wondered why. I had to learn he wanted to make everyone, but just once. I kept calling but he was always busy. Whenever I approached him at the school he was busy practicing. His rejection led to my leaving the school.

I told Uncle Charley, "I don't really want to be a dancer. I'm bored with it."

The truth was I'd met a couple of hairdressers in Long Beach at this time and decided I wanted to become a hair burner. I told Uncle Charley I thought this would be a better time-occupier for me. So it was off to Beauty School.

I was back in the full swing of things. There were plenty of queens at the school and I was involved in parties and fun again, and "who gives a damn!" It was *gay*.

The course took nine months and much to my amazement, I stuck it out. It was one big blast. I was living with wild abandon once more. I even learned something about hair. And my own hair changed color almost weekly.

Once I wrapped a permanent wave upside down. It was very difficult to do. It was interesting but it wasn't pretty. I bleached one woman's hair with such a strong solution all the hair at the top of her head fell out. One girl's hair turned green from tint. Another day the shampoo hose got away from me, and everyone was drenched. I was soaked, and there was water all over the school.

After wrapping a machine permanent I had to take a test curl,

using a pan of water. Bushed from a *busy* night before, I sat down on the radiator, put a couple of fingers in the pan of water and put them to the curlers connected to the machine, which was in turn plugged into the electricity.

At that moment, shock bolts shot through us both. Her True Confessions went straight up into the air. She started shaking like she had the St. Vitus Dance. In the process she kicked over her shopping bag and apples spewed all over the floor. I was shaking like a winter willow, *sure* we were being electrocuted.

Miss Phipps, the instructor, yelled, "Unplug it! *Unplug the machine!*"

It was one of those days when everything went uphill all the way. I went home early.

There was one thing I was grateful for—the sign over the school entrance:

ALL WORK IN THIS SCHOOL IS DONE EXCLUSIVELY BY THE STUDENTS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE INSTRUCTOR. HOWEVER WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DAMAGES, PERSONAL OR PROPERTY.

Thank God for that sign.

When I started school I didn't know how to make a pincurl. And I couldn't see why we had to learn all the muscles, nerves and bones of the body. Good Lord, I guess I was going to operate. I never could understand what it had to do with hair.

You had to have 1600 hours to graduate. The first three months you were a Freshman and students worked on each other. We were not allowed to work on paying customers.

The latter six months we worked on customers. One customer left a fifteen cent tip after her \$1.95 permanent. I called after her, "Ma'am, you forgot your carfare!"

We had one hour of theory in the morning and then a coffee-break. Afterwards we worked on customers' hair for the balance of the school day.

Then came the big day—the State Board examination. There were three women examiners. The first day was taken up by

written examinations. The final day was filled with Practical. And you brought your own model for the Practical Test.

As we worked, the state inspectors came by and asked questions: "Which muscle are you working on right now?"

If I wasn't sure I *swiftly* moved my fingers to one of which I was certain.

The worst thing that happened in the examination was during a manicure. I cut the model's cuticle and in pain she spilled the pan of water in which her other hand was soaking. The water went all over the both of us. This brought on the State Inspector.

"Your name?"

"Mr. Kenneth."

"You'll never make a million dollars giving manicures."

I said, "I hope not."

But I graduated.

Weekly, I went through the scene with Uncle Charley about leaving him. We went round and round and he would cry buckets of tears.

When I'd first met him Uncle Charley was the night janitor for two Long Beach department stores. But now, in order to support his habit—me, *we* extended to seven stores. And he was hardly ever home.

He objected after the first day about the dancing lessons and thought dancing wasn't for me. He objected too after the first day about hair dressing and said that wasn't for me either. But I stuck that one out. I had to explain him somehow to my new-found friends, and he became "Uncle Charley." I'm sure nobody believed us but it didn't matter since we saw so little of each other. When things went from bad to worse I said it again, and this time was final. I was leaving.

"Where! Where will you go?"

"I'm going to Chicago—anywhere," I said. "I'm going anywhere where I can get away from you."

It was our last scene and he knew it. But he made a deal with me. It was to make himself feel better about my going. He really knew I wasn't coming back.

"Look, Uncle Charley," I said calmly, "I'm going to go to

Chicago because I have to go *somewhere*, just for a couple of months. I'll go to Chicago and then if I have a change of heart I'll come back, okay? But I've just *got* to get away from California for awhile. It's driving me out of my everloving mind!"

He went to the bus station and got my ticket for Chicago. And he bought a trunk to carry all the clothes he'd purchased for me.

As the bus pulled out of the station I turned and waved goodbye. Now to Chicago, and fun, and *excitement*, I told myself. California had been full of experience. I'd had plenty of sexual advancement, I had a profession to fall back on, and now I was free of "Uncle Charley."

And, Uncle Charley had *never* had me!

"At Bennie the Bum's"

THE BUS HEADED EAST. This time I didn't get off in Pomona. I'd reached a different plateau. Pershing Square is for a different type of queen, I said to myself. That's not for me, anymore.

I now had a good profession on which to rely. Why, I wouldn't be caught dead in the Square anymore. That was all behind me.

I loved the Greyhound Terminal T rooms from coast to coast. Some rest stops were too long and others too short. They were always too short when you'd see or meet something interesting. And it was such a nice concession—Greyhound operating all those T rooms for royal travelers.

Everyone on the bus had an interesting story and I shifted around and listened to a lot of them during my sojourn East. And someone was always coming aboard with a sales pitch. People were selling *everything*. An extra charge for this and for that. Everybody was hustling something. It seemed like everyone was getting *commercial*. One has time to think on a long trip like that. It was so long, I ran out of thoughts.

I arrived at the La Salle Street Station in the Loop late in the afternoon. I had come away from Long Beach with a bit of change but I wasn't flush. I didn't know where to stay. I'd had a sanctified background for seven whole months—way back—and I'd been going to church on Sundays with Uncle Charley, so obviously the only place to stop was the Young Men's Christian Association. Little did I know that the YMCA was the hubcap of the whole operation.

I nearly wore myself out taking showers! My room door was never closed, always at half mast. Someone was always waking me at three or four in the morning to see if I had a match. But my

little light didn't light up the whole room. I always lit the matches so that the faces showed, because some of the "young" men were not! At one time I considered spending my life touring the YMCA's. I got a job almost immediately at Arlene's 24-hour Beauty Salon on the near North Side and had to leave the Y, eventually, because I wasn't getting any rest. I was getting so *tired*. I managed to take care of the floor I was on through any one night, but they'd lock the gates between floors. Those Christians sure don't trust one another! They did it to divert some of the traffic. There was so much traffic on each floor that it would have been really jammed up if they'd permitted interfloor traffic, too.

I kept changing floors every few days in order to see what was around elsewhere. After all, being able to traverse only one floor at a time was limiting me. I had to think up excuses to change floors. God, the excuses!

There were open wells inside each section of the building and you could look across the open area and see the material across the way. I would sit on my windowsill and watch the strip actions and the parades, the beckonings and sometimes even the circuses going on across from me. Some of the exhibitionistic types liked to go through their orgies with the shades up and the lights on, because it was more exciting to know they had an audience. And if they wanted more participants, it was a sure way of "drawing a crowd."

Chicago brought on new interests for me. My shift at Arlene's Beauty Salon was from eight in the evening to four in the morning. We got a real classy clientele—the cream of the crop! But, oh, what spenders—whores, hustlers, swing shift workers, buyers from department stores and a parade of all the oddball people who live at night when the sun does a fade. Big tippers, everyone of them. It was the period of big, lacquered hairdos, the cannon-stick outs, the upsweeps. We used Kotex for rats to build the hair up.

Arlene was a semi-crippled dyke with a game leg, and bleached hair. She always wore slacks with a flannel shirt-jacket. Her lover was a beautiful, tall, blackhaired stripper from Clark Street.

At the Y one of the boys asked if I had my ID and when I said yes, I was over twenty one, he said, "Great, let's go to a bar on Clark Street, Bennie the Bum's."

It held four hundred fifty customers and had one of the longest bars in the world. The owners were a short, heavy-set Jewish couple, Sy and Mollie Ginsberg. His brother, Sol, worked there. Sol was married to a lovely Irish girl who always drenched herself in Prince Matchiabelli perfume. I associated the fragrance with her for all the years of my life that followed.

I started going there nightly. I'd found a *new* Square. Another bar, the Wind-Up, was a couple of blocks away. But I preferred Bennie the Bum's, so I hung around there most nights, having shifted at Arlene's to days. My nights, I figured, would be better spent socializing than rolling permanents.

What with Bennie the Bum's, the Y, and work I was pretty busy. You couldn't leave the Y wearing "Angelface." So I would apply my makeup in the T Room with the rest of the queens when I got to Bennie's. But *where* can you take twenty showers a day and always draw an immediate crowd? The compensation made up for the inconvenience.

My job was going well enough at Arlene's, working four days a week which was enough to get by. Since I was such a good customer at Bennie the Bum's, knew so many people, yakked with everyone and carried on like Queen of the May, Sy said he had a job for me. I needed the money.

"What do you have in mind?" I said, frankly.

"Do you know anything about dice?" And I thought, with *my* family?

"Yes, of course."

I was hired. I would have given anything or left any job to be on the staff there, because it meant I could stay all the time without paying instead of just coming in evenings and buying or hustling a few drinks.

I took over one of the three "26" tables. There were ten dice in each leather cup and I barked the business into a roar. "Play with my box for a quarter?" I announced gaily as I yelled out through the milling bodies of men. Customers got back a \$1.00

chit for drinks when they won. It was good business and Sy was a man with a cold, steady, beady eye for *business*.

One thing that occurred to me was that when working in a bar you are ten times more attractive than when you are just sitting there. Everyone always wants to make the handsome bartender in the tight black pants and I felt there were occasions when it was possible for me to be made. But it has its drawbacks. You are propositioned nightly and it is wonderful flattery, but what happens? The flirter is always going back to someone sitting at the bar, forgetting that he agreed to take you on after closing or, the one who patiently sits through until two, and ends up too damned drunk to be worth the bother.

Hallowe'en was coming and I insisted on working in drag because I was sewing up my costume. I said it would be too packed for the "26" game, so Sy agreed I could do the night in drag if I helped out behind the bar when they got busy.

People said my legs were great and I should show them off. I bought miles of lavender and white-striped material and whipped up my drags. I made a strapless top, a circle skirt, gloves minus the fingers, added ruffles to the bottom of the skirt, got a pair of heels and pasted the material to them, and got a big, high, floppy hat from the Salvation Army to cover in the same stuff. I was *matched* from head to toe. The hat dangled with a big cabbage rose and I added another at the waist, and carried an old beaded bag in which to keep my change and "busfare".

I could hardly dress at the Y, so I dressed at Ralph's house. He went as a pirate. Ralph was one of the bartenders and had an apartment in a building also owned by the Ginsbergs. We got a cab and made our entrance. Everybody said, "My God, look at Kenny!" I puckered sweetly, "My name isn't Kenny, tonight!"

"What is it, sweetie?" someone asked.

"Call me anything, honey, but *call* me!"

Sy informed me I wasn't eligible for a costume prize because I worked there. But I knew I could get away with more. After all, nobody else got up on the bar and danced from one end to the other. I worked the platform with the three-piece combo. The

only song I knew the lyrics to clear through was "Shanty In Old Shanty Town".

I was terribly nervous.

After all, as a singer I didn't even make a good choir boy.

Maybe I wasn't good, but I was damned loud. I didn't use the microphone—I didn't *need* it.

When the pianist asked what key I sang in I told him I didn't know but to play a lot of base notes, "the ones on the bottom that are *loud*."

I adlibbed every other line and the audience kept laughing. The more they laughed the better my voice sounded to myself. There were moments when I was almost sure I was *on* key.

My only hope was that the place was packed with people who thought the same way Flo Ziegfeld did. Ziegfeld always said wardrobe was 90 per cent of a show and you only needed ten per cent for talent. I was sure 60 per cent was showing someplace.

I finished and brought down the house. The boss wouldn't let me off the stage. Not knowing the words to any other song, I just started camping. I said to the combo, "Come on, boys, just give me some noise. I'm gonna make like Gypsy Rose Lee!"

Coming off stage I found myself knee deep in drinks. Everybody started calling me Becky and insisting on buying me another drink. If mother could have seen me then she'd have realized that I was solving our problem . . . on my own!

A beautiful, tall, slender, blond man, 25, junior executive type, came over. He offered his hand to shake and was very dignified. I flipped my beaded bag a few twirls and dropped my jaw. This was going to be a lovely evening.

"Buy you a drink?"

". . . yes."

"What are you drinking?"

"The best!" I insisted.

The bartender served me another beer.

He said, "I hear your name's Becky?" We both laughed.

"What's your last name?"

My sense of humor got the best of me. Thinking, at the time,

all top club entertainers were Jewish as was my boss, and *they* were doing all right, I said, "Beesmann. . . . Becky Beesmann. What's yours?"

"Jack Compagnon."

"Hello, Mr. Jack Compagnon."

"And what are you doing for the next year or so?"

"Is this a proposition?"

He suddenly looked so intent. "Why don't you take off those things and we'll go to my hotel?"

"You from out of town?" As if it *mattered!*

"Yes, I have a jewelry store in South Bend, Indiana."

As I grabbed my bag in the dash for the door, I looked back to see if he was still with me. He was.

We cabbed to Ralph's apartment and I changed my clothes, faster than I'd ever before managed. We drove to the Palmer House.

Jack was just a little high. I thought it wouldn't last and he would snuff out but when we got to the room he was wonderful.

He began by being very generous. I admired a radio on the dresser and it was mine.

Here was another Daddy, but *young*. What a *fool* I'd been! I didn't know they came like this, too.

He opened a bottle of champagne. We drank it all and turned off the lights.

Jack's arms encircled me and drew me close. He gently kissed my lips. His lips moved to my eyelids, my earlobes, my cheeks.

I felt like I was melting. Warm mellow waves swept over me and I thought, My God, I hope this isn't just a dream. I'd watched the tides at the beach so often. I felt like waves were washing the debris into the ocean. Nothing mattered. There was this moment and I was powerful, and powerless.

The fingers carefully unbuttoned the front of my shirt and his gentle, strong hands moved caressingly over my shoulder, across the width of my back, feverishly circling my pulsing body. I drew myself tight to him, feeling the warmth and excitement of his body.

Why does one want to rush such a wonderful feeling? I wanted

him to hurry, to move quickly, to take me. But he proceeded sweetly, calmly, with loving tenderness.

I reached down to remove my trousers, quickly. I threw off the rest of my clothing and lay on the turned-down bed. In the soft light of the street lamp through the window I watched him quickly remove his own clothing.

One look at his beautiful, golden torso and I knew that it was a proud body, one he'd taken care of. Now it was mine to enjoy, to cherish, to possess.

He gave me the most personal thing he had to give, his body. I gave him the only thing I had to give—love.

Next morning he ordered breakfast sent up. I snuggled deep into the lovely pillows and sighed to myself, "Dearie, this isn't Clifton's cafeteria anymore, so to hell with that damned waterfall."

I held my radio, and was about to say, "It's my Birthday a week from Saturday," but I didn't get it out. He beat me to the punch by asking, "Can I see you tomorrow night?"

In the meantime, he went back home and returned. I met him at his Hotel—in my suit, because we had an hour before I had to be at work. He said he'd just sit at the bar and wait for me. I'd heard this so many times! He said, "I have something for you."

"What a beautiful watch," I exclaimed as he slipped it over my wrist. "What pretty rhinestones."

"Those aren't rhinestones, those are diamonds."

I can't remember why but I thought of Long Beach, and then that thought faded to my coming to Chicago. My timing is certainly right, I thought. I wouldn't *have* to cheat on this one . . . beautiful body, good in bed, young . . . I could stay true to this.

I was tired of flipping from sheet to sheet, bed to bed. For years I had been confusing sex for love. And I was really in love. Something was happening to me that I never before felt. My various affairs were quick and fast and all one-night stands.

Only "Uncle Charley" had any permanency. But that was for neither sex nor love.

This was love, for the first time, really love. And I hoped

I could be true. There was no reason to have roving eyes or cruising walks. Everything I wanted was waiting for me, each night, in my own bed.

He stayed at the bar all night and waited. That night Jack was buying so many drinks for everyone in the place the boss let me off early, to sit with him. Since Hallowe'en I hadn't been working too hard. I didn't have to. There'd been a change. I was sort of the fair-haired one.

A well dressed lesbian was sitting there that night and I borrowed her hat and fur stole. I glanced down the bar at Sy who was smoking his usual fat, black stogie, and he nodded for the combo to begin.

"Shanty?"

"You're on, Becky," the leader nodded.

I'd work only in my station when I did my number, but the loud laughter of the packed Saturday night crowd encouraged me to waltz back and forth the entire bar.

The boss loved it. He could add the business increase in his head as he listened to me cavort. The crowd from all over the bar was drifting toward my section. When I finished, I said, "Sy, they want more!"

He replied, "So, give 'em more!"

I went to the combo and whispered and came on to do "The Old Gray Mare."

"The Old Gray Mare, she's nelly in her underwear. . . ." and swished and camped wildly, posturing and exaggerating.

Everyone was singing. I was *on*!

It was like sitting on top of the world. Every eye was fastened on me. Everybody wanted to enjoy me. The extroversion flowed from me.

One knows what they're doing when they're "on." He is like a fox toying with hunters. He knows just how far he can go.

I toyed with them, milking it for everything it was worth. And it was worth all the thrills, the excitement, the zest it was giving me. It was another avenue of love.

Nobody was leaving. The place was getting packed. From that night on I had a new job. I was the *entertainer*. And Jack Com-

pagnon put his arm around me, gave me a big hug and said, "You've got *talent*."

Each night I'd bring more props. I wore an old formal which I'd lift to reveal my riding boots. The boss gave me a raise, I quit Arlene's Beauty Salon, and moved out of the Y. I moved in with Ralph.

Within a month Jack had showered me with presents—cufflinks, rings, cigarette lighters. Lovely and expensive things. Very few sport shirts or cheap washable pants.

It was so sweet of him to have to prove his love. But I didn't need material assurance from him. Verbal confirmations, little moments of "I love you", were enough. Just being with him was what I needed.

I thought, "Am I going to drive him away?" I didn't realize this is the way so many queens lose what they want most. They insist on constant utterances of reassurance. And their lovers get tired of having to state it. They drive them right out the door by demanding those three little words. I didn't want to make that mistake.

One evening I announced to Sy I was getting married next week. An engagement and wedding party would be held—a combination type affair. I was combining the two. I knew he was bringing me a ring and footing the bill for champagne for everyone.

At two p.m. on a Sunday afternoon I arrived and he was waiting for me. He wore a beautiful dark suit. I wore a little black sweater with bell sleeves over a white linen shirt and tight black trousers. It said what I wanted it to say. My entrance was fantastic. It was snowing outside and no one saw my outfit until I took off my teal-blue fingertip camel hair coat. I was so *nervous*!

I was very demure. I floated onto my stool, next to him, one leg hung, one cheek on.

"Hi!" I breathily vamped.

"Drinks for everybody," he said to the bartender. Jack looked at me. "I have something for you," he smiled, opening a tiny black velvet box. My first wedding band!

"Oh, I almost forgot . . ." he laughed as he reached into his pocket and brought out a diamond ring which he slipped on my finger. I wished, at that moment, that the party would end right then.

We spent the night at the Palmer House. The weekend was over too soon. Saturday night to Monday morning—"What a Honeymoon!"

My hours were so different from his, but we managed. Things went well for the next few weeks.

One Saturday night he was in waiting for me and I said, "It's silly for you to wait. You've been working all week and everything. Why not wait at the apartment and I'll be home as soon as I'm through."

I hadn't noticed he'd been sitting at Ralph's station. Or perhaps I just didn't pay any attention. After we talked, I noticed he stopped to whisper something to Ralph. Jack walked out the door. It was a slow night and Ralph left without telling me he was leaving. I sat there for about five minutes and then asked Bill where Ralph went.

"It's slow, so Sy said he could go."

"Well!" I bristled. "If it's that damned slow, I'm going home, too." I whirled around on the stool. "Sy, can I take the night off?"

"Yes."

I was about thirty minutes behind them. I walked quietly up to the building. No light was coming from below the door. Quickly, I put the key in the door, opened it with a fast movement and flicked on the light to see two naked bodies in the bed.

I exploded.

I picked up their clothing and threw it out the front door into the snow, and charged back in, yelling, "Out . . out . . out!!"

Jack wrapped a sheet around himself and ran outside to retrieve his things. "Why don't you go with him?" I shouted to Ralph. He dressed and left. Next day Ralph came and packed his things. He and I weren't very close after that.

Getting a bottle from the cupboard I took a long swig, and got on a crying jag. "I thought he *loved* me," I moaned.

I climbed up on a bureau and peered into the mirror, turned

and looked about and forgot why I'd climbed up there. I looked at myself again. I got down and went into the bathroom to get a razor blade.

"He cheated on me. How am I going to explain this to everyone at the bar?" I was going to be a martyr.

I looked at my forehead in the mirror. All I could think of was Jack. I raised the blade to my forehead. Superficially, I carved "J," with a V-bottom forming immediately from the blood. I finally finished with A-C-K, between slugs from the bottle—to kill the pain. The "K" was awfully weak, because I was getting fuzzy and I had no more room left. "My forehead isn't long enough . . ." I mumbled.

The bar hadn't closed yet. There was an hour and a half left. I went to the phone and called a cab. I forgot my coat in the apartment and went out to the cab in my shirt sleeves with drops of blood sprinkled down the front of me. It was dramatic, and cold. "So what!" I declared to no one.

"Where to?" the cab driver asked.

"Bennie the Bum's—North Clark—and fast!"

I stepped out of the cab, with wide and large steps, grabbed for the door and swung it open, almost flying along with it. I looked in. It was too dark to see anything. I went in.

There they were, sitting like a couple of whores in church. They couldn't believe what they were seeing . . . me . . . full of blood. The blood was freezing from the cold air. I went over. They sat very still.

Jack and Ralph couldn't figure out what was wrong with my forehead and I couldn't understand why they couldn't *see* the "JACK." I *shoved* it in their faces. No remarks!? This bugged me. "There! See? JACK—J-A-C-K!"

I gave him back the gold band. I threw down the gold cigarette case and stepped on it. I walked over to the door, yelling, "And this, too!" as I heaved the diamond watch out. And then I came back in.

"G'bye!" I stomped out. Later, I wondered why I kept the diamond ring?

I never saw Jack again.

It was a typically short, American marriage.

I later learned that several years following our separation, his father, who owned the jewelry store, was going broke from Jack's lovers' gifts and Jack was spending a little time in Joliet.

I did more and more shows at Bennie the Bum's. Entertaining was practically all I was doing. During intermission one night the most distinguished man I'd ever met—grey temples, 45, beautiful dark tan, the George Sanders clothing—sat down. "What's a nice boy like you doing in a place like this?"

"Well, I hadn't given it any thought. . . ." I began.

He didn't let me finish, but asked if he could take me to dinner the following evening. He was Fred Marsh, Dr. Fred Marsh, a leading brain surgeon in Chicago.

He took me to the Swiss Chalet. It was so elegant I felt out of place. There was so much silverware!

The next weekend it was the Edgewater Beach Hotel for cocktails. Then out to his house for dinner. He propositioned me to quit work and live with him. If I would he would buy me my own beauty shop. But I was only twenty-two. The world was at my feet and I was so young. I wanted fun! Not security, or just *love*. I had the Uncle Charley thing and had just gotten over Jack. I was hesitant for too long! And *he found another* hairdresser.

You can't pick a winner every day!

One day I got a call at the apartment from the Joe Pearl Theatrical Agency. He'd caught my act and wanted to know if he could book me.

"I've got a job," I told him. "I get \$60.00 a week."

"This pays \$100.00," he said. He wouldn't take "No" for an answer. He said to be in his office by two o'clock.

I went down, telling myself I *hated* show business. I didn't know *what* I wanted.

There were pictures of stars on the walls. I sat down at his desk. He tossed a contract across to me and said, "Read this."

My name was on the top. It said: "FEMALE IMPERSONATOR, NOVELTY ACT. \$100.00 a week. Holiday Inn, 18 North State Street, Calumet City, Illinois."

I would open in seven days. He had to have my decision immediately.

"What'll I do?"

"Strip."

"Strip?" It was wild. "I don't have a wardrobe," I told him. "I've just been doing comedy."

He gave me the name of one of the people on the show, saying, "Call Frankie. He's in the show and he's a dressmaker and will help you. I'm short of acts and they want a whole, complete drag show."

"Okay, I'll call him," I declared.

I went over to Frankie's that same afternoon. He owned the dressmaking and costume shop *right next door* to Arlene's Beauty Salon. He'd seen me at Arlene's but he didn't know me.

Patterns and materials were all over the place. It was piled high with confusion. His lover was sleeping off a drunk in the bunk bed in the back. I showed him my contract.

"I don't have any clothes for this kind of an act. I don't know what I'm going to do," I stated frankly.

He was scanning my contract. He could see my salary and how many weeks I was going to work at the Holiday Inn. His mind was like a calculator. That was all he needed. With this he patted my wrist and said, "Don't worry about a thing, dearie. I'll have you all fixed up in due time. I've worked these shows before. You can get a draw on your salary the second night! And make it right with me."

Then he woke his drunken roommate and told him I was going to do the show. "Burt" got up and gave me the once-over.

I was fitted with a wig. Off with my clothes. On with a G-string. Heels, a corset with a built-in bra. They draped a white material on me. One of them pinned a red cabbage rose on the hip. I looked in the mirror. An hour later my first costume was complete.

It was getting dark outside. They decided I should see a strip show.

"We've got time to catch a show right now. I have to deliver a dress to one of the strippers."

"I have to be at work by 10:30," I told them.

"We have time," one of them assured me.

We delivered the dress. Frankie said, "Sit here and watch every girl who comes out. In a week you'll be doing it yourself." I watched carefully.

The week went by fast. There were lessons on my number. Rehearsals. Routines. They taught me how to strap my privates flat. They taped my breasts tight to get a cleavage, then roughed in the shadow. Frankie cut sections out of a pair of nylons and filled them three quarters full of birdseed and these became my flexible breasts to fit inside my bra and jiggle when I moved.

My routine came easy to me because of my ballet lessons. And Uncle Charley had said dancing classes would be a waste of time for me! He should see me now!

"What's your stage name?" I told them about Becky Beesmann at Bennie the Bum's. Minutes later they were still in shock. I could tell it wasn't a good stage name.

"Everyone thought it was very funny," I assured them.

"This isn't for fun. You're now a professional. You have to use Mister in front of your name. What's your first name?"

"Kenneth."

"Kenny . . . Kenny . . . what's wrong with your own name, 'Kenny Marlo'?" Frankie asked. It sounded nice. I repeated it a couple of times. I liked it.

Tuesday was here. I was nervous. We got on the train for Calumet City. An hour and a half later I stepped off the train and took a cab to the Holiday Inn. This is it, I told myself. I'm a professional. I went in.

CHAPTER FOUR

Let Me Go!

CALUMET CITY, twenty-five minutes south of Chicago, has been repeatedly written about as the Sin City, the Wickedest City in America and a lot of other descriptions, all adding to its notoriety.

It's a self-imprisoned zoo. The inhabitants are every kind of hooker, hustler, and hardened Hannah who exercise the wild life. They remain within their environs, going only from spot to spot to drink, gamble, and whore.

The zoo itself is a cacophony of barkers calling attention, loud, bawdy music, miles of neon compressed into five or six square blocks of Night Life. Any pleasure of Sin is available. For ■ price. And the price is right—whatever the traffic will bear.

State Street is the main line. The *amusements* tumble up and down both sides of it, piled like pick-up sticks in a bramble.

It borders up to Stateline Street and ends, suddenly, completely. Across Stateline Street is Hammond, Indiana, quiet, reserved, respectable, for all the world like an unhappy neighbor, looking across the fence, wishing it would be cleaned up and proper.

There are citizens of Calumet City who live on quiet, shaded streets, working and trading in Hammond, South Bend, or Chicago. They don't tear down the jungle. It's there. They live with it. They ignore it.

"I'm going to be good," I said to the face that looked back at me from the mirror. "I've come this far and I'm going to be professional."

There was one huge lightbulb above the mirror. My "please-

don't-rain" suitcase was on the shelf below it, looking somewhat pitiful with its cardboard sides.

I glanced around and noticed everyone was writing his name over the cubicle he was in. I took my eyebrow pencil and wrote my name "KENNY MARLO" over it. Then I added a star on top.

Sitting next to me was a little fat boy with a high voice. He was from Baltimore. His name was "Willie Dee". Willie had a barrel-shaped waist and the skinniest legs I'd ever seen. His wig was a doughnut-shaped halo of curls which he set on top of his own hair. He had to wear his glasses to apply makeup and we had to help him up the stairs since he couldn't see the steps. He sang the popular music on the bill. All his costumes were crepe or jersey formals, like something one wore to the Eastern Star get-togethers.

Next to him sat an Italian boy, Tony Carmencita Carmen Miranda, from Philadelphia. He had very dark skin. He had a huge Durante nose and did comedy bits, wearing an old dress over ruffled bloomers with a bunch of cherries pinned to the crotch. He always took an old, battered suitcase on stage with him to add various props as he worked.

Then came Ray James. He was a stripper. Ray was very masculine-looking. He had long straight black hair, muscles that didn't stop, and a tattoo on one arm. He was let go the second week. I always thought he should have stuck to truckdriving.

Next cubicle was occupied by a six foot two, two hundred and ten pound, baldheaded man with varicose veins, whose name was Gita Gilmore and he did comedy relief. He'd been in drag for many decades. His costumes were all rhinestones and feathers and he did take-offs on Mae West. The audience loved him.

Marley Lewis wore a platinum wig with long bangs and Mary Pickford sidecurls. His gowns were always very clean and fresh, beautiful things. His body was chalk white and besides being a stripper, he was a dressmaker, in Chicago.

Next to him was Francis Blair, who arrived with a trailer in

which he lived during the booking. He, too, was a bit older, and very nice. He was a singer of Ruth Wallis-type songs.

Also on the bill were five female strippers—real females, real strippers. There was a male MC to introduce the females and a female MC for the drags.

It was a continuous show from nine in the evening to five in the morning. We just kept taking turns. The establishment was open twenty four hours a day but the show lasted only eight hours.

The MCs came down to get the introductions ironed out, and find out what the various performers were going to do, collect the music for the combo, and so forth. I was told I would be fifth on the bill, following one of the comedians.

My turn finally came. I heard my name for the first time, from the wings. I walked out into the spotlight as Kay introduced me. There was a small scattering of applause. They didn't know me—yet!

There were three steps to the stage. I caught my breath and walked on. I began to slowly waltz around the stage, the spot following me. The people were smiling up at me from the edges of the stage and I smiled back. It relaxed me. I'd known everyone at Bennie the Bum's, but these were strangers. Except for Joe Pearl who was out front catching the opening.

Then, as I turned and moved, with my back to the audience, I spotted the saxophone player. He was a *doll*. He smiled. I smiled back and gave him a grind. I forgot all *about* the audience.

The tempo picked up. I'd worked off my long gloves as they played *Night Train*. I reached back with my left hand, bent one knee, unzipped, and my gown fell off. I clutched it to my body with the right hand as I moved to the side of the stage and handed it to the MC. I raised my arms straight out to louder applause. The tempo increased as the combo switched to *Caravan*.

I still had on the jewelled bra, the panties and a flared panel. I removed the panel. The piece was nearly over as I unsnapped the bra, lifted off the falsies and straightened out the arms again, to show I was a male, at the finale. I ran offstage.

I heard the applause as I gulped a deep breath. I could have yelled, with the excitement that roared through me. I ran back for a bow. My first strip was over.

I felt I aged ten years in those several minutes onstage. Six shows later it was much easier. And I was much better.

I went back downstairs to the dressing room. All at once I was know-it-all. My confidence had come back and I regarded that star above "Kenny Marlo" as justified. People gave me suggestions and advice, clues and tricks of the trade. Marley handed me a pair of opera hose and said they would flatter my legs. Francis Blair said, "Let me help you with your eyes." He added several dark lines to "bring them out" and false lashes.

I was improving with age and I was *aging* fast. But they were all very friendly.

Within weeks I was able to transform myself from visual male to female in a short time. Each evening when I got into costume it became easier.

I always made sure my legs were shaved clean. I also shaved under my arms, and across my chest and stomach, making sure there was no unsightly masculine hair to mar the illusion.

The process began in the nude. I lifted each testicle into the socket above it and flattened the penis between the legs and up into the crotch. Then I put on a special, heavy G-string to hold it flat and keep it in position. This kind of special *string* is worn only by male strippers in the trade and is not for general use. It's hard to get used to and generally uncomfortable, but one must suffer for Art's sake. After a while I got used to it, but it was never very comfortable.

When performing in costume, but not stripping, I wore a special girdle which I'd purchased through a pulp magazine advertisement. It was put out under the Lili St. Cyr label and was less embarrassing to order than across the counter. I just sent away for it and there was no sales clerk to whom to "explain".

The girdle I purchased had padded hips and padded buttocks. These enhanced the illusion. Some queens wore a french waist-cinch while others, including myself, wore the oldfashioned

hour-glass corset with the staves and backlacing, to give me an eighteen inch waistline.

The cleavage was formed by pulling together the pectoral muscles and pushing them up. Two inch surgical tape was wound beneath, pulling each side up into the center of the chest. The center crease was rouged for shadow effect and curved down into a V, giving a deeper appearance, from the stage.

The body was ready. Then the face was prepared.

I started with white clown paint on the eyebrows to blot them out. I usually used Max Factor greasepaint and powder as it covered the beard shadow better. I noticed a lot of queens closed the pores of the face first by rubbing the skin with ice-cubes. The greasepaint was applied thickly to be sure the beard was covered.

Before powdering over it, to achieve high bones and hollow cheeks, and a delicate chin, I blended a darker shade for shadowing. When this was accomplished I dabbed on the powder with a very fluffy puff. This is absorbed into the greasepaint and takes out the shine. I removed the excess powder with a baby brush, leaving a gorgeous, satinsmooth skin.

Next I took a rabbit's foot and brushed rouge on the "point" of the cheeks and added a dot of it on my chin to bring it *out*.

Using an inch wide camel-bristle brush I softly rouged the upper eyelids. The eyebrow pencil was sharpened with a razor blade, giving it a big, blunt edge. I rested the little finger on the bottom of a cheekbone and made short hairlike strokes to create the *new* brows.

I put beading mascara in a spoon, heated it with a match to melt it, took a wide camelhair brush and applied it to my lashes making them thick and lush. Then I took liquid mascara and encircled the eyes, to doe them, bringing the outer ends up, for illusion. The inner circle of the lower lid was additionally lined with clown white, to bring out the white of the eyes. With the lipstick brush, I put a dot of lipstick on the inner point of each eye, to make it pinker.

Each night, after using, I would place my dampened false

lashes on a piece of toilet tissue and roll them around a thick pencil, to keep them curled.

Lashes are cut straight across when you purchase them, and have to be trimmed to a slant so that they are small towards the nose and arch out and long at the end. They are put on with Johnson and Johnson's liquid adhesive and you take a toothpick and poke them down gently until they are stuck on, and dry.

After the lashes were on, I applied some eyeshadow and blended it in. Everything was done carefully, precisely, and, after a while, easily.

The lipstick was applied with a brush and shaped to form the proper lipline. Feminine looking lips are a special technique and must be studied to be done well. Heavy shades of red are usually worn by performers because the color fades out, under the hot lights.

After the face was finished, I put the padded falsies into the bra and put it on. Then I put on the wig, using spirit gum and applying the glue to the french lacing. Using a damp cloth, I blotted it until it was hardened dry.

This spirit gum had to be removed later, each night, when the wig was taken off and cleaned with acetone. I always placed it on a wigblock to keep it *set*. And I protected it by covering the whole block with a crepe chiffon scarf.

After I was all dressed and finished applying the false nails, the last thing I did was hold my hands up over my head to have all the blood drain down, making my veins disappear.

I was ready to go on.

When I wanted to be especially glamorous, I added vaseline or lipgloss to the lips and upper lids, to make them shine. Sometimes I added glitterdust on the lids. It stuck to the vaseline and made me gorgeous. Occasionally, when I wanted to be a real camp, I'd spray my wig, after gluing it on, and sprinkle glitterdust.

Actually, I have never been a transvestite, as I do not camp around the house. My preparation of make-up has always been only for entertaining in night clubs, or for private parties, *never*

for around the house. I wouldn't be bothered with all that, and not be paid for it.

There were questions every night as the first few came off stage. "How's the audience?", "Many out there tonight?", "Is the boss out front?", "When's payday?"

I put a cigarette to my mouth and lit it. Someone suggested I wear his kimono. I had been sitting at my cubicle in my G-string after I came off. He said I would catch cold. Next day I bought myself a housecoat.

Then a very tall, slender, middle-aged man walked into the dressing room. I turned around.

People were saying, "Hi, Bill." "Haven't seen you in a long time."

"Get out your cards."

"What cards?" I asked.

"Honey," one of them answered, "don't you belong to AGVA, the American Guild of Variety Artists?"

"What's *that*?" I wanted to know.

"That's our *UNION*!"

I knew there were a *lot* of us but I didn't know we had a *union*, I thought to myself.

I said I would *love* to join. I thought I would pay up immediately as I asked, "How much is it?"

I didn't have the \$125 in cash. The others were all members. I was informed we had dues of \$12.50 every three months. I would actually have to pay \$137.50 to join. WOW! What am I going to do, I wondered.

"Don't worry about it," Bill said. "Paydays are on Tuesday nights. I'll be here every Tuesday and you can pay me \$20 every week until you're all paid up."

I wondered what we did between shows. The boss had come in. He was Burt Sardano. He was big, husky, with thinning hair. He always chomped on a big cigar and wore beautiful sport clothes. When I first caught sight of him, he seemed so tough-looking I didn't know if I should talk to him.

"Show's going *great*!" was the first thing from him. "In be-

tween shows I expect you to come up and hustle drinks. So after your numbers get up there and *hustle*." Then he left.

There was a bustle of conversation. Gita said, "I don't barrel-house!"

"Well, I need the money," Willie Dee whined in his high voice.

Gita came back at him. "I was paid as a performer—not as a B-drinker."

"Well, I have my house payments. I'm buying a little place in the country," Francis said, very calmly.

"Well, they can't *make* you drink. Says so in the AGVA contract!" someone else added.

Some of them were dressing to go upstairs. I was *dying* to get upstairs myself, so I put on a blouse and skirt and hurried up. As I was walking up to the bar a man said, "Hi, I liked your number. Want to sit down?"

"Why not?"

"Would you like a drink?"

"Yes, I'm as dry as cotton," I said girlishly.

"What are you drinking?"

I hesitated. I was going to order a beer but the waitress caught my eye and said, "I'll bring your drink. I know what you *want*." How could she? I'd never seen or talked to her in my life.

She brought a shot glass and a water chaser. I said, "Here's how!" I took a sip. I was set for a bitter taste and was prepared to have to grab for the chaser, but nothing happened. I drank the whole thing. I didn't know what it was but I knew it *wasn't* whiskey.

Leaving him, a moment later, I asked the waitress, "What was that you gave me?"

"That was a B-drink," she said.

"Awfully weak, aren't they?"

"It's tea, honey! Did you save your wooden stirrer?"

"Why?" I wanted to know.

"Every B-drink served you has a star on the stirrer. You break off the top and save the star," she told me. "Then at the end of



AN EARLY PORTRAIT—
even then, the author seemed content to “camp it up” in a dress.

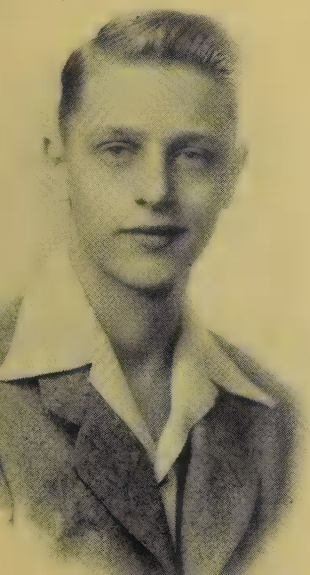


MOTHER, SON AND FIRST LONG TROUSERS—
one of his earlier “straight” roles.



MARLOWE'S MOTHER (middle), THIRD STEP-FATHER
AND AN ANONYMOUS BARMAID.

The bar, located in Des Moines, Iowa, was owned and run
by the author's third step-father.



AT AGE NINETEEN—
when Marlowe met his first Sugar Daddy
and “moved” to Long Beach, California.



BRIEF BUT STORMY ARMY DAYS. "I was determined to play it very sharp and very G. I." But there were at least fourteen other men who failed to realize this.



Serious days as a missionary student.
"Africa calls . . . but I
couldn't answer."



MR. MADAM—"At Home."



KENNETH MARLOWE.



Author of Autobiography, "MR. MADAM".



MR. MADAM AT WORK—
helping to keep nineteen nice young boys off the streets.

the night you turn these in to the bar. If it's a *Brandy* it's two stars. The bartender gives you a quarter for every star you have at the end of the night."

I rushed back to find my stirrer. It was on the floor. It was my first percentage. I held it for a moment, then dropped it inside my blouse.

It wasn't long before I learned a lot of things. If there's a suspicious customer they throw in a couple of drops of liquor to add odor.

I soon got hep and bought myself a top-snap coin purse in which to carry my stars. Some nights I was doing so well drinking that I hated to stop and do my number. When I was knee high in drinks with various live ones the boss said to stay on at the table instead of stripping.

Champagne brought \$10 a bottle commission. It was fun. If I was at a table I'd divert the attention for a second and poured the contents on the floor. Soon my heels were *drenched*. Once I even slipped on the damned stuff as I got up. Customers would be smug because they were buying us the real thing and they knew the champagne wasn't a B-drink. And some of them toyed with the idea they would be able to get us drunk. But with the vast portions I was tossing aside it didn't take long to kill a bottle. The customer paid \$32 a bottle for it.

If you had a bottle of champagne at the bar, to *share*, it was even kickier. The bartender would fill your glass as quickly as you sipped it. But this was handled as the glass-switch. I continually waved to people and "introduced" my *host* to friends or the cast members, and during these by-plays the bartender switched my glass under the bar, to pour out the champagne. The switched glass was filled with gingerale. I loved the champagne buyers. I loved that nice commission.

To me being a B-drink hustler was like being a geisha girl. If an old fossil asked to buy me a drink as I walked past, he wasn't interested in my having the refreshment. He wanted my time and companionship and that was what I always felt I was giving in exchange for the cost of the drink. It never concerned me that the drinks were fake. Customers paid for my time that

otherwise could have been spent resting in the dressing room. I *never* felt sorry for the customer. And besides, some of them *wanted* to buy me a drink. Not for my time but for me. They liked me and I grabbed that feeling and told myself it was love.

After the first few weeks a few of the drag queens were let go. I had become one of the best B-drinkers in the place. I used to get so full of tea I swore my eyelids were beginning to slant. They kept me on.

Commuting to and from Chicago got to be too much. I moved into a Hotel in Hammond, Indiana, which was across the street. I lived in one state and worked in another. And it usually took about sixty seconds to get to the job.

The boss liked me. A lot of the queens raised their painted eyebrows when he bought me an elegant sport shirt one evening, as a "gift", and gave me a raise. I was averaging \$20 a night in percentages on B-drinks.

Some of the others wouldn't hustle drinks and were let go. The number of males in the show dwindled and the number of female strippers was increased. The boss extended my contract.

My boss owned five clubs besides a bookie joint, a gambling house and a whore house. In addition to a wife, he had a mistress, named Shirley. She talked out of the side of her mouth like Gloria Grahame. I became very chummy with both his family and Shirley. After all, I was his little *moneymaker*.

He told everyone about me. He was pleased with me. My wardrobe, my collection of wigs, my musical arrangements, everything was building. I wasn't unhappy. I was having myself a living ball.

One night in the dressing room, the three remaining female impersonators got the axe and they thought I had too. One of them asked where I was going.

I said, "Nowhere." They looked bewildered. "I just signed a contract for another eight weeks!"

And I was the only boy left. Burt hired eleven new girl strippers. I was now the *star* stripper of an otherwise all female strip show.

Burt bought a large neon sign that went across the front of the club. It read:

MR. KENI MARLO
Exotic Queen of the Boys

The boss had decided my first name needed a twist. So he *twisted* it. There were lifesized blow-ups of me in costume at the entrance, next to the crap table. I was now the toast of Calumet City.

The owner of the Riptide, two doors over from the Holiday Inn, brought in a female impersonator from Finocchio's, in San Francisco. He was "The Great Lucian." We were the only two drags in town.

All the strippers in town would stop by to catch the act when they weren't on. I had been there nearly a year.

I hustled the visiting club owners for drinks and they got a laugh out of it. No B-girl could have accomplished that.

One day, I went to Marley Lewis' dressmaking shop-apartment in Chicago for a fitting. He was now making all my drags. I bought the materials and he would make them and charge me \$25 for each costume.

After my fitting I found I had a few hours before returning to Calumet City. Marley told me about the Lincoln Turkish Baths and how kinky it was. I went.

At the desk I checked my valuables which were put in a little safety box.

There were cubicle-rooms up and down long corridors and people were roaming up and down the halls draped in towels and sheets. The doors were usually half open. I was having a little fun when all at once I heard a loud whistle. Someone screamed. "It's a *raid*!!"

We had to line up outside our rooms, and show our ID which was brought to us from the front desk. Then we were told to dress. I thought I was going to get locked up. I was furious, thinking I wouldn't have time to pick up my dresses.

It took two hours for the police to finish the raid. I was sweating, sure I would be late for the show.

Anyone caught in a room with another person was taken off to jail. I had been alone at the moment they blew in for the raid so I was released.

I got my ass going because showtime was due, by taxiing to Calumet City. It was expensive. As the star of the show I appeared last. This saved me.

Everyone asked where the hell I'd been.

"In a *raid*," I yelled back as I flew into my own private dressing room, tore off my streetclothes and got into my G-string. For the first show I was still breathing heavily. I had to make six appearances a night now.

A week later I went back to Marley's to get my new costumes. He'd painted the bathroom stool, the tub, the walls and the floors Chinese Red. In the kitchen *everything* was Chinese Red. He had apparently bought up all the Chinese Red paint in Chicago. It looked like the Chicago fire. He had been on marijuana and was flipping his lid. And it got the best of him. That was the end of Marley for me.

I found another costumer shortly afterwards. But I had no desire to go to the baths after my fitting.

A few weeks later Burt had to go to a "Meeting" in Italy. He left Shirley to run the clubs for him. When he was gone she asked me for my assistance.

We ran 'em! We got drunk by ten in the morning and stayed drunk through the rest of the hours we were up. We'd get up on top of the bars and do our strips. We were gambling all day long. It was a blast.

Her regular job had been to break in the poor, dumb little backwoods country girls and train them as B-girls. She dressed them and showed them how to move and act. And *I* was learning everything in the book. If the men paid enough for all their drinks they got enticed to the cathouse. Business was swinging in every direction.

Burt came back from Europe. He'd received word things were not kosher in Calumet City. Shirley came in the Holiday

Inn with a huge black eye. Her arm was in a sling and she looked a mess. She came down to my dressing room and began to cry. Burt had threatened to kill her, she told me.

"You gotta help me escape!" she moaned.

"What do you mean, escape?" I asked. "If you want to go—GO!" I turned to put on my make-up. Looking at myself in the mirror I said, "If I wanted to go, I'd just pack up and go. . . ."

"You mean you don't *know*?!"

"I don't know what?" I asked.

"You mean you don't know? You *can't* leave this town! Nobody leaves . . . until he's *done* with you."

I thought she was kidding.

I sent a wire to Bobby Brennen in Cincinnati to see if I could join his show at Newport, Kentucky. He wired back, "Yes, I have an opening." I informed Burt I was handing in my notice.

He informed me I wasn't leaving. I couldn't believe it. I really *couldn't* get out of town. Shirley was right. I said I needed a rest. I wanted to go home for awhile.

"You're not going anywhere until I let you . . . if it's more money you want I'll give you more money."

Burt gave me a twenty-five dollar a week raise. That didn't solve anything as far as I was concerned. I now saved every dime so I could leave. I hustled twice as hard so the kitty would build faster. Then I wired Bobby again.

"I'm on my way."

The train into Chicago didn't go fast enough but I finally made it into town and to the airport. The hop to Cincinnati was a short one. I took a taxi to Bobby's place.

It was nearly showtime. I left my bags and we went to the New Look Club in Newport. Bobby put me in the show and I played the final two weeks of their bill. Calumet City was now completely behind me. I had been fortunate enough to get away.

The new show was small but fun. Bobby was the MC and each time he took a bow he spread his full-skirted formal, fanning it and bowing to thank the audiences. The out-front audience caught this graceful performance but the orchestra's view was Bobby's big, bare ass.

The two weeks in Newport had me doing Hawaiian dances and a number like a jungle Princess in a costume of black mario-bou and white animal teeth. I wasn't allowed to strip and I'd been able to purchase the whole costume from a queen, for a mere \$20.

Bobby booked the show into the Club 52, in Indianapolis. We all drove up in Bobby's car. There were five of us: Titanic, Nottajohn, Billy Camp, Bobby and myself. We added a production number as a finale to lengthen the show.

The new finale featured all of us in half-male and half-female costumes made by Bobby. We were in a line and turned to show the appropriate side of the costume to match our high or low voices, as we sang:

"We can be boys, we can be girls,
We can wear tiepins, we can wear pearls.
We can wear short hair, or tresses,
We can wear trousers, or dresses . . .
We can wear powder, we can wear paint,
We can even make you think we are what we ain't . . ."

Each of us had to appear twice every show. And there were two shows a night. We finished by midnight. The management didn't permit mixing with the customers unless we changed to men's clothing and were invited to join a table. Most of the time we sat in the dressing room and played gin, or sewed beads. It was all very calm after what I had been used to. I began to relax and feel like my old self for the first time in many months.

I just finished the first show when the colored waiter brought me a note backstage. It read, "Please come to our table." There was no signature. We weren't often asked to join customers. It caused excitement.

"Aren't you the *lucky* one!"

I took off the wig and combed my hair, and changed into sport clothes, leaving on my stage make-up.

As I went into the supperclub the waiter led me to a table near

the rear. It was quite dark and I couldn't see who they were until I got up to them.

There sat Joe Pearl, Shirley, and Burt Sardano!

Burt stood up. He extended his hand to shake and asked me to join them. I was dumbfounded. They asked if I wanted a drink and I replied, "I usually order champagne, but I'll have a brandy if you don't mind." Burt laughed.

I thought they were down for the Memorial Day races, which was the reason the Club 52 had booked our show.

"Show Keni what you've got for him," he said to Joe Pearl.

Joe reached into his pocket and brought out a contract, laid it on the table in front of me, patted it and said, "Best deal you ever got."

I could tell by Shirley's eyes, I had to sign the contract. I was afraid. I signed the paper almost immediately.

The contract was for twenty-two weeks with a twenty-two week option for \$200 a week. Outwardly, everything at the table was calm. Burt looked suspiciously pleasant and his smile had the leer of a snake. Joe did all the talking. I didn't care about the money. I knew they came after me. I looked at Shirley again. I was scared.

As I stood up I excused myself for the second show.

"We'll wait until you finish the show, and then we'll finish our conversation," Burt stated. I felt numb.

The dressing room was abuzz. They wanted to know who had invited me out. In Cincinnati, I'd told them about leaving Calumet City, and now they were frightened for my sake.

"He'll kill you!" Bobby cried.

"You *know* he's a dangerous gangster," Titanic said, "And besides, you have a contract for this show."

"He's going to pay it off," I said flatly. "I *have* to leave with them—tonight."

Immediately after the show, I packed and we left.

I was back in Calumet City.

But it was a phony gaiety. Burt gave me living quarters in an apartment over one of his clubs. I felt I was always being watched.

It wasn't fun anymore. It was like a prison, and I didn't care about anything.

I was so upset by my "imprisonment" I could hardly work. I decided not to B-drink. I remembered Gita saying he was a *performer* and didn't have to barrelhouse. So when I went upstairs after a number I sat alone. Burt came over and said, "Get to B-drinking!" I didn't answer him.

I went down to the dressing room to sit with the girls who were waiting to go on in their spots. I heard loud footsteps but I didn't look around.

"I said get *upstairs*!" he yelled as he hit me on the jaw. My chair fell backwards. My wig fell off. I got up, put the wig back on, tears falling, ruining my damned eye make-up.

It was nearly time for my number. I repaired my face and did my strip with tears flowing through every bump and grind.

I went downstairs. He came back downstairs. I was terrified. "Just a *minute*!" I said. "I'm dressing. I'm coming upstairs. I'll mix with the customers!!"

I went up. I was so frightened I went to every table in the club. I asked everyone to buy me a drink. Burt came over to where I was sitting with somebody and asked me to join his table. His guests sat there with their broads, and Shirley, all waiting for me. I looked at her. We said nothing.

Burt said, "Aw, come on, Keni, have a drink with us. God damn you, you little shit, what do you want to act that way for? I give you good money. I *like* you!"

He handed me a ten dollar bill. "Here, Keni! I wouldn't have hit you if I didn't like you. You *know* that."

Yeah, he liked me . . . I thought. He saw dollar signs every time he looked in my direction. I meant money, *lots* of money.

I caught Shirley's eye. When it was convenient I whispered to her, "You were right. Hi, cellmate."

The next day I went to the phone booth in one of the bars. I called Joe Pearl, my agent. He found himself extremely busy when he learned it was me on the phone. He couldn't talk to me *just then*.

What could I do? I called mother in Des Moines. I had called

her from Chicago a few months earlier and we were on good terms again. She'd been glad to know I was well, and working, not too far away. She had remarried. This husband was a man twenty-three years older than herself and they owned and operated a small neighborhood beer-bar.

I didn't explain my predicament because I didn't want to upset her just then. But I was soothed by the news they were selling the tavern and their home, to take a long vacation down South before heading West to settle in San Diego. They would, she said, drive over to Chicago in two weeks to see me before leaving the midwest.

I began making new plans to escape. I didn't know if he would do anything to my parents but I felt sure Burt wouldn't *hurt* them.

During those two weeks I "changed" my attitude and as far as the Holiday Inn was concerned everything was back to *normal*. I was wonderful Keni Marlo again! I was the little money-maker. Everybody seemed relaxed.

Mother and her husband arrived but all the hotels in Calumet City were full, so Shirley suggested they stay in one of the rooms above the club for the night. I knew it would be for only one night. And they wouldn't, I hoped, realize it was a whore house.

Shirley had been making her own plans and I knew she too was going to leave soon.

My parents caught the late show and went up to bed in their room. I went to my apartment and gathered what I could. It would be impossible to pack much because I didn't want anyone to notice what I was doing. I wondered about my large wardrobe. What could I do about it?

We packed what we could in the car without being conspicuous, taking only a few costumes from my dressing room. I mentioned to one of the girls backstage, I had to "work" on them.

Mainly, this was to divert attention so that we could make distance before I was discovered missing.

We left just before dawn. Everything in Calumet City was quiet even though the clubs were open and the bars were operat-

ing. My parents thought my wardrobe of personal items was meager but I said I was having the rest of my things shipped on. I was escaping finally but I didn't want to alarm, nor frighten them. I told them the show was my final one on the contract and I wanted to try my luck somewhere else for awhile.

The farther we got the better I began to feel. I'd think about what I was going to do later. We headed due South.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stop the Music, Honey!

THE TRIP was just what I needed. The tension had been mounting for weeks and I knew I couldn't go through another return by pressure to Calumet City and the Holiday Inn. My life had ceased to be my own there. I'd never had to live like that and everything in me fought it. I was able to think of nothing else but getting out of Calumet City and be my own free spirit again.

The trip South was marvelous. It brought lasting memories. I never paid any attention to scenery before and this was just the thing I needed to erase all the torture from my mind. The pressures were leaving and my relaxing was not just calming down. It was a kind of collapse into a peace I'd never before known.

At Chattanooga we stopped at Rock City where you can see seven different states from a high precipice. I gloried in the beauty all around.

There were bales of cotton piled high on the docks in Nashville. It was such a pretty town. But I remember it for another reason.

We stopped at a motel off the highway and took two cabins for the night. I couldn't sleep at first from the complete erasure of all pressures. I went out for a walk. I hadn't walked a half block when I found companionship. The manager's son decided to walk along with me.

We chatted as we slowly covered the area and returned. It's strange how we always manage to spot one another, no matter where we are or what the circumstances. I spent very little time at sex in Calumet City the last few months there; I'd been too

busy with everything, especially drinking. Now, only two days away, here was sex again, and I was more than ready.

We spent the night together in my cabin. If I needed relaxation, I got it. When we drove off in the morning I was limp as a wet rag. But I was very happy once more.

We drove past the beautiful old plantations—the big manor houses with the old slave quarters behind them. It was all new to me and I became completely absorbed in seeing everything as we went. The romantic old Spanish moss trees were like something at Tara.

I kept expecting Rhett to come out any second to proposition me. But then everyone I saw began to look like a southern gentleman. I knew I was going to *love* the South.

We came to Lake Pontchartrain and drove over a long bridge. At the end of it was my home for the next few years. That geography wasn't all wasted. Here we are, I thought, the Louisiana Purchase, at last!

All my thoughts of Burt and Calumet City were down the drain. I was going to start a new chapter in life and I wouldn't allow myself to think of the past. After the evening in Nashville with the manager's son I'd begun to think of sex again and when I looked at people as we drove along I thought to myself, at this point I'll go to bed with anybody, even Uncle Tom in his cabin. But it *never* came to that!

We arrived in New Orleans and took a motel for the night. One of the drag queens had told me about a club called the My-O-My and I was anxious to see what it was like. I didn't think Joe Pearl would be able to trace me again as he had done for Burt the first time. I wasn't about to give a repeat performance for the return to Calumet City.

No sooner were we at the motel when I checked the phone book for the address and told my parents that it would be fun to go to the Club My-O-My for the evening. I said I was going to apply for a job there.

We dressed and I got some of my photographs ready before we drove out to the Club. It was located on the East end of West End, in Jefferson Parish. It was an hour before showtime so we

decided to have dinner at the Shrimp House, across the street. The meal, on the veranda overlooking the bayou, was excellent. Huge fried shrimp and a tremendous sauce. I loved seafood and I knew I was going to enjoy New Orleans. No more spaghetti-sharing, I told myself.

I was very impatient to go across the street to catch the show. But we dragged through dinner long enough to pass the time.

We went through the bar, paid admission to the show area, and took a table. I liked this show because it had production numbers and a finale. It was more exciting than what I had been used to. I wanted very much to be accepted by them.

I went to the Cashier's window, to a woman named Erma and asked if the owner or manager was in.

"There are three," she said. "Which one do you want?"

"Well, I'm a female impersonator and I want to find out about joining the show."

"Oh, just a moment. . . ." she told me. She asked the *maitre d'*, John Day, if he'd seen Paul Rivers around.

"Why, yes, he's sitting over on the side terrace."

John went to get him and they came over. He was fairly tall, pale, with a medium build. He seemed to wear a perpetual sneer and never really listening. He looked like he wouldn't trust his own mother.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Keni Marlo."

"What do you do?"

"I'm a dancer," I told him.

"Photos?" He looked bored by the whole thing.

I handed them to him. He leafed through them several times, then looked back at me with half-open lids. "When can you give an audition?"

"Anytime," I said. "Whenever it's convenient."

"Can you get ready for the next show?"

"Yes." I knew it wouldn't take but a few minutes to drive back to the motel to get a costume. "I'll run back to the motel and get some wardrobe and be right back," I replied.

We hurriedly drove back to the motel, got my costumes, wigs,

make-up and jewels and came back to the My-O-My. He said, "The dressing rooms are back there," indicating a long dark hallway off to the side. I walked cautiously through.

It was the most crowded little room I'd ever seen. There were gowns and makeup cases, furs and street clothes piled high on everything in sight and in every space not taken up by bodies. I said, "Hi," to someone who was just going out of the room to go into the Club to barrelhouse. There were two or three other men still in the dressing room.

Candy Casbar was sitting in front of a small mirror *pounding* powder into his face. My face twitched in pain watching him. He was using a huge powderpuff, and discussing last night's trick.

Struggling into a dress was Rocky Baige. When he finished, he blotted his lips and said, "Hi." They both turned to look, except for Laverne Flowers.

Nothing would have turned his head. He was a wino and was usually next to immobile.

I boldly announced, "My name's Keni Marlo. I was sent back to get ready for an audition."

There were dozens of questions. "Your first drag place, honey?" "Well, what do you do?", "Do you know Gita Gilmore?"

When I said I was a dancer from Calumet City there was a deep sigh. As long as I wasn't a singer or a comedienne it was "wonderful!". They said the show had only one dancer. They needed me, I was told. I didn't conflict with any of their routines and was acceptable.

Someone shoved a pile of things aside with a sweep of the arm to make room for me. Things fell on the floor and remained there. It didn't matter, in all that confusion. Everyone watched my every move as I got ready. I carefully applied my make-up and put on my wig. As I started to get into my costume they "ohed" and "ahed." They had never *seen* such drags.

I was only twenty-four and among the youngest in the show. But they were nice to me and I felt very comfortable with them. They asked what I was going to do in that costume!

I said, "A Sally Rand fan dance," spreading my six foot pink ostrich feather fans.

The MC came back, bringing the orchestra leader. It hadn't taken long for comment to spread through the place and everything was abuzz. The orchestra leader looked through my music. The MC asked how I wanted to be introduced.

Before I knew, it was time to go on. I walked to the edge of the stage, checking my drags. I tested the pins of my feather head-dress to make sure it was firm. The gown was a solid, pink bugle-beaded, floor length dress with an open back, split on one side to the knee.

Dusty Evening announced me and I waltzed into the spotlight to a flutter of applause. Then there was an "Oh" of excitement over my costume. I had the pair of fans draped across an arm like a bouquet of flowers. I smiled confidently. I was "in."

The dance took only a few minutes and I milked every second for what it was worth. As I did a few turns I took one of the fans, snapped it out and circled it over my head and posed. Then I took the other and reversed it to a pose. I would bring them down, up and over and keep posing. The entire number was simple enough. Mostly a series of poses and stops.

The audience broke into applause as I moved around. Doing a couple of twirls and moving the fans to over my head I deftly snapped my gown at the neck. The left hand moved to the bosom to hold it. I moved a couple of more turns and let the gown slip off.

Carefully I kept the fans in front of me to preserve the illusion of nudity. The band finished my music and the audience broke up with yelling and applause. I slipped offstage.

They wouldn't stop applauding. I returned to the spotlight, the fans still in front of me, and did a short encore, finishing with the fans at the ends of my outstretched arms to reveal the flesh-tinted leotard trimmed in sparkling sequins. I bowed, dashed off and grabbed for the stage-wall to hold myself up. I knew I had made it.

Well, New Orleans, what have *you* to offer, I thought? It didn't take but a minute to find out. I hurried back to the dressing room.

The boss was back there and as I walked in he was saying to

the others, "Why don't you bitches get wardrobe like that to make the show go over better?"

I was appalled. I didn't want to get these hate-sisters on my back. I wanted to keep in their good graces.

But it didn't backfire. All of them continued to be very pleasant and friendly. We became good friends and there were few, if any, problems in the cast.

He hired me immediately, and informed me there were three shows a night, the first show to start at ten and the last to finish at two in the morning. The salary would be *sixty dollars* a week!

It wasn't Calumet City salary but then it wasn't Calumet City in a lot of respects. I didn't mind. I was glad to be in a friendly atmosphere, having fun and not worrying about how to get out of town, if necessary.

I did the third show that night. This time I put on my black mules, black teddy, black night gown and negligee, with black ostrich feather trim, and carried a hair brush and gilded mirror as props.

My wig was medium auburn, with a high scoop-wave in front that dipped over the forehead to one side, the sides were swept up high and caught by a flat large black velvet bow. The rest of the hair in back hung loosely down to the middle of my shoulders.

I was announced for this spot as "our new star, fresh from Calumet City!". The orchestra was playing "Sleepy Time Gal." I pranced on coily to go into my number.

I began by looking in the mirror, stretching and yawning and after combing the back of my hair, I turned the mirror and caught the spot light in it and reflected the light on various males in the audience. Then I stripped.

When I was through I found everything in the dressing room was a bowl of cherries. Mel Amboy came over to say he did all the costumes and routines for the production and finale numbers. And, he said, "The Club pays for it." Then he added, "But we have to work on a budget!"

"We've got to work you right into the finale for tomorrow night. Too many singers in the show and not enough dancers. I'm

so *glad* we have another dancer. This will help give the finale a little life. Honey, I do all the choreography too, you know."

Between shows I changed to comfortable clothes and worked my way into the bar. The bartender told me I was *great*. "You're *terrific*!"

He was a tall blond from Oklahoma. But he was nice. And the first thing he wanted to know was where I was staying.

"At a motel," I said, "with my mother and her husband."

"Well, I have a small apartment. Why don't you stay with me until you get settled?" I thought, yeah, until we're settled in bed. Funny what you'll say yes to, in an hour of need!

The cut in salary didn't bother me. It didn't seem important. I had peace of mind. I was back in my element. I went to the table where my parents were sitting and told them I had the job. I said I was going to "stay with the kids" to go over some routines after the show. They went back to the motel.

I went home with Bob.

His small apartment was off Bourbon Street in the French Quarter. He hadn't been expecting a guest, apparently, and as we walked in he turned the lights on and quickly turned them down to low beam, picking up clothing as we walked, and tossing the covers back over the bed in one motion. We settled down for the night.

I had many questions to ask. I got clued in about everything and everybody.

It was the smartest move I could have made. I learned everything about the club I needed to know. I found out who to be nice to and who to be careful of and who not to say what to.

Bob was tickled pink after a night in bed with me. He must have thought I was going to live there forever. Because in the dawn's early light he crawled out of bed and left. But he was back a half hour later, loaded with bags of groceries like we were going to set up housekeeping.

Bob made breakfast and dinner for me. The breakfast was served in bed. But we went to the table for dinner. It was spaghetti and meatballs! I didn't say a *word*.

When we got to the Club everybody knew I'd worked fast and where I'd spent the night. All the cast was really a club. We got thicker than thieves. We had potlucks together. We had orgies together. We went to the beach together. All of us were always together. I found that when you worked at the My-O-My you were part of the clique.

We hustled drinks again here. I wasn't new at this game. I thought I wrote most of the rules, but here it was a bit different. For one thing we worked together, sometimes in larger groups, but most of the time in pairs. If you were at a table you called to another "entertainer" to join the "party". It took only a couple of nights to learn they did all the tricks of Calumet City and a few new ones.

They'd join a table and promote. "Want to hear a dirty story for a dollar?" And, "Would you like to buy a picture of me for a dollar?" These were pictures of us in our drags.

We'd even hustle tips. Under ordinary circumstances people in clubs would say "No," when you'd hint for a tip but here we made sure they had a few belts under them and we'd catch them offguard. We made money. Tourists loved to be able to say they danced with a man in women's clothing and we collected a quarter a dance to let them be able to brag about it back home.

One night I waltzed past a table, fast-talked my way through a drink and was gone before the check arrived. When I passed by on my way to the dressing room I heard the woman's voice say to her husband, "He's one of those men dressed up like a woman. Yes, dear, that's the one I bought the drink for. I didn't *know* it was \$1.89 for each drink. My God, I spent *all* my egg money!"

We didn't get much salary but we ended up with plenty from barrel-housing. I'd put my old torn opera hose on and tell tricks things were bad and hose cost \$5.95 a pair. And when I plied them into shelling out a \$5.00 bill to "help me out" I'd say, "I feel terrible taking money from you like this, but it will help."

Tossy Wayne and I soon paired off, hustled tables together and shared the workload. We wore blouses and full skirts with nothing on under them.

Tossy had two little tricks of his own which I'd never thought

of. When a John said he couldn't get over how much he looked like a girl, Tossy would ask for the dollar and then let him put his hand under and check for himself. It proved the point. And made a lot of extra dollars!—but cut down on the dates.

One night I said to Tossy, "Why do you carry around that key ring with all those keys?"

"Next time I get a date lined up I'll show you," he said.

We were sitting at a table and were propositioned when Tossy said to him, "Why sit here and get lushed? You can go over to our apartment, get comfortable and wait for us. Here's the address and my key. And we'll meet you right after the show. There's some booze in the cupboard and you just make yourself right at home. If you fall asleep, we'll wake you up." Then he collected \$5.00 for "cabfare" for us to get home *faster*.

We went to the dressingroom to get ready for the next show. We were applying fresh make-up and I said to Tossy, "I wish you hadn't done that because I've already got a date after the last show."

"That's all right, Honey," he said to me, "with *that* address, he's only going to the Charity Hospital!—and those keys, Honey, I collect keys from *anywhere*. God knows what *that* one would open!"

We had a sheriff on duty at the front door during all performances to take care of any problems. And if anything ever came up we learned quickly that all we had to do was deny *everything*.

I left Bob, the bartender, and moved in with Tossy. He was living in a building owned by Dusty Evening, the MC. Dusty, or someone, had remodeled the place, an old house on Gravier Street in the Negro quarter. There were six apartments and every tenant in the place worked in the show at the Club My-O-My.

We'd cook meals together and eat in one another's apartment when the spirit moved us. We'd get home at dawn and sleep during the day, usually until about four in the afternoon. After the Club closed, we'd often go to the French Quarter for drinks. And there were always tourists around, to be made.

We'd have parties in the back patio of the apartment building on Sunday afternoons and invite everyone over for cocktails. It was very homey. Everyone in New Orleans made their way to our house at one time or another. It was *the* place to be and, most of all, it was fun.

We had to change wardrobe once a month at the club for the various production numbers because all the local customers had to be entertained as well as the carriage trade. The apartment was always massed with clothing, in various stages of completion. Some of it was brought in from the old show, some was being taken out for the new one and some being worked on for a future show. There were piles of formals and furs and props all over the places. But it was home.

Tossy was French-Italian and often went on cooking jags. He'd come home from work half-drunk and start pots of chicken cacciatore cooking. And it simmered and bubbled for sixteen hours at a time. I often thought it would just melt away. But it was delicious. Anything would taste good if you had to wait long enough for it to be done.

Things were going along pretty well in the show until one night when Gene O'Day got drunk. He sang the popular song numbers and did a takeoff on Sarah Vaughn. Gene came to work one night and said he was getting married to Blue Baby, an MC-singer at a club in the French Quarter. She was a skinny, red-headed dyke who always wore solid blue, sequinned formals. They got married and before long they had a baby girl they named Scarlett Baby O'Day. One thing about it—the kid had oodles of fairy godmothers! We all pitched in and tossed them one hell of a baby shower. And how we fussed over the poor kid! Shortly afterwards the three of them disappeared. We never heard from or about them again.

In the dressingroom of the club, the windows were high and barred, to keep anyone from stealing wardrobe. The room was a half story below street level. People outside, in the alley, could look down into the dressingroom, if the windows weren't covered. Most of the time it was too warm to keep them covered.

Boys who were too young to get into the club came very early

each night before the first show to watch us dress. They'd say, "We'll show it to you for a quarter."

"My God, what's that?!" I asked, the first time I heard them out there.

One of the cast said, "Give them a quarter and see what happens." I took a quarter from my pocket and handed it to one of the boys. He smiled down at me.

"Thanks," he said. "What's your name?"

"Keni," I said.

"Oh, you're new here." He dropped his pants and said, "Look!" I looked.

"Go ahead and play with it, if you want to," he said. "You paid for it." He stuck it through the space between the bars.

Just then Dusty Evening came into the dressing room and said, "Keni, get ready for the show!" I was frustrated. Dusty checked the show line-up which was held up by an icepick in the door-jamb at the entrance.

The boy looked at me. "I'll wait till you get back," he said.

Sure enough, after the opening number, there he was, waiting. And his was still a hell of an impressive sight. After that, every couple of nights he'd bring a new friend for me to "meet".

When I'd been at the Club for a while, I learned the routine of when the production numbers were going to change. It was almost time for a new finale; a *fun* finale. It was nearly Eastertime and the theme was an Easter Parade. Imagine fourteen queens trying to outdo one another after the boss said, "Wear what you'd wear on Fifth Avenue in the Easter Parade, if you were going to be there for the holiday."

Well, it was big hats, yards of netting, feathers, flowers and rhinestones, until you'd have thought Mr. John had a Fire Sale! It was more of a circus than a parade. Everything was "secrets" until opening night. I loved it. My hat could not be described.

There were two table elevations in the show area of the Club My-O-My. The upper elevation had a solid, waist-high railing around the edge. All the tables had floor-length white tablecloths. Tossy and I met two handsome Johns one evening and were giving them the part-with-the-cash business. We had gotten past

the feeling-around stage. Tossy got so overcome that, before I knew it, he'd cased the room to see that no one was looking toward our table and was under it and the cloth. Ten minutes later he emerged. Everyone was smiling blissfully.

Once I asked Tossy why we always had such big crowds for the first show. He said, "Didn't you *know*, dearie? We're on the Tanner Grayline tour—two drinks, they see the show and that's *all* they spend." They were immediately hustled on to the next club on the tour. But it always meant a full house for our first show.

One night a terrible thing happened. We all went down the street to Mike Currie's bar for a drink after closing. Someone ran into the bar and yelled, "The My-O-My's on fire!" We dashed into cars and flew back to the club. Someone sitting near the bandstand, next to the stage curtains, had apparently left a burning cigarette and that was the end of the old Club My-O-My.

The poor "straight" firemen! All the bitches were running back and forth, getting in the way, screaming about their furs, their pearls, their shoes and gowns.

"I have to send clear to Chicago to get my size 11's made *special*," one of them was crying.

The stage, the dressing rooms, our wardrobes, everything was gone. We were all heartbroken as we drove back to the apartments, put on the coffeepots and spent a sleepless night talking about the good times at the Club My-O-My.

But it was not all bad news. Three weeks later the bosses had the new Club My-O-My ready to open. It was across the street from the burned-out club, next door to the Shrimp House. They'd bought another building and revamped it to resemble the old club.

Thank God, we ~~didn't~~ have *all* of our wardrobe at the Club the night of the fire. Before the new Club opened the sewing machines came out, and everybody went mad working on new drags. We looked through the papers at announcements of remnant sales. The salesman at a Leeds Shoe Store nearly dropped dead when we all went in for fittings of pointed black suede pumps at one time. The man asked if we wanted to go to the

rear and try them on in *privacy*. We said, "Heavens, no! When we can sit *here* in comfort?"

We also took over the Salvation Army and the Thrift shops. It was all fun, and exciting.

I'd gone down to the State Board of Reciprocity after the fire. I had to have something to "tide me over". So applied for a State beauty license and received it, immediately, after paying \$25. I was in hair business again. I worked nights at the Club My-O-My when it reopened, and days at the Wohl Beauty Salon, in the posh Wohl Apartments.

It was a wonderful shop because we got all the carriage trade of New Orleans. There were very few male hairdressers in the city at that time and I was the only male at the new Wohl Salon.

Everything in the new Club was fresh and beautiful. Even the dressing rooms were clean—for a few days. Except for customers; they were still the *same* old customers.

Hallowe'en was just around the corner. A man who owned the French Opera House bar invited the whole cast to come down and put on a show at his place. He'd have a buffet for us, and we'd get all the free drinks we wanted. It would be kicks.

It was the Eve of Hallowe'en. We worked until two, and would be working the following night and Hallowe'en would be over unless we celebrated a night early. After the show we all gussied up and went to the French Opera House. It was about 4 A.M.

The place was packed. We each did a number for the crowd. Candy Casbar was on the platform doing a song when all at once the doors burst open. Five uniformed policemen started down the aisles. They looked like they were all over the place. One of them blew a whistle.

"Okay, stop the music!" one of the policemen yelled.

A young queen, sitting near me turned around, looked up at the officer and said, "What do you *mean*, "Stop the Music?" What do you think this *is*, a radio program, or something!?"

Well, the music stopped. Everybody started filing out. I had crawled under one of the tables. "You, down there," one of

them commanded, "come on!" I crawled out and dusted off my knees. What a way to *ruin* a gown!

The nicest, biggest, blackest, shiniest Paddy-wagon was backed right up to the door for us. We had an audience outside of all the people who were in the bars on Bourbon Street. There was a cop on each side, holding back the crowds. We had to lift our skirts to get up into the paddy wagon, and we started to carry on like wild.

"Will you help me up, honey?" said Tossy Wayne.

"Oh, do I have everything . . . where's my purse!?"

"Oh, dear, what will *mother* say?"

"Watch those *hands*, sonny!" yelled another queen in a deep voice.

They took everybody in the entire bar. The first trip to the First Precinct Station was able to haul only the cast in our lovely drags. The Station was eight blocks away.

They told all of us in costume to form a line. We formed into a semi-circle as we did for our finale. Standing next to the Sergeant at the desk was a photographer from the *Times-Picayune*.

"Okay, girls, get closer together, lift your skirts, show your legs and let's have a great big smile." Well, we didn't have to be *encouraged*.

"We're going to be in the papers!" "Oh, good! Will it be on the front page?" "Well, *anything* to sell papers."

We were only too happy for the publicity to help business at the Club. It meant we would do better with barrelhousing and tips, and everything else. We all smiled our prettiest.

We were put in the same cell, along with two heterosexuals. One of them said, "I just got off work. I've never been *in* that bar before."

There was only one small window up near the top of the cell-wall, and a barred opening in the otherwise solid wooden door. Candy Casbar said, "If they ever check my record from Puerto Rico I'll *never* be released!"

Several were too drunk by this time to care. One queen was tossing bennies out of the window from her purse as fast as she could. The biggest scene-stealer was Dusty Evening, our land-

lady, who kept screaming, "You can't do this to *me*! I'm a *taxpayer*! I'm a *property-owner*!!"

Hours later, as the sun was coming up, they came to the cell and called us out, two by two. As they left the cell, nobody came back, and we couldn't figure out what was going to happen to us.

Then finally, they called my name. I found out they were not going to execute us! We were given our things and told we could leave. Bail had been paid by someone. We weren't told who. We were released and "given the gate". When we got out the door we were greeted by the bright morning sun, and an audience of everybody in the French Quarter on their way to work. Everyone was staring and laughing.

We had to walk in our heels, on the cement, back eight blocks to the cars. Our beards were coming out. We'd been in the dirty old jail all *night*.

Two by two, half a block apart, we trouped up the street. It was the longest drag procession in history. We *really* stopped traffic.

I had on my black net formal with a huge rhinestone clip in the cleavage, a white fox of Lila Leeds, and that was what had caused all the trouble, I told myself, since it had been "in and out" a number of times itself. Gene O'Day had bought it when Lila needed the cash, and later I'd bought it from him.

We were to go back to Court the following evening at midnight for sentencing. But we had a show to do!

The boss thought about it for a minute and said, "You take care of the show—I'll handle this." Seems it wouldn't make much difference who appeared in Court since nobody would recognize us out of drag. He sent fourteen of the waiters to "represent" us.

The waiters came back with the results. The Judge fined everyone \$10 and commented, "I don't think these boys meant to be *bad*. They just got into the Hallowe'en spirit a little early, that's all."

And we learned that Mike Currie had paid the bill for us. He was the one who'd called the raid and paid the bail to show how "friendly" he was. That was to entice us to come to his bar and drink. *Now*, he wanted to be friends, after having us *raided*!

Anything for business. But it backfired. The Club My-O-My did all the business as a result of our front-page publicity.

With improved business, we thought up a new gimmick. We'd give the waiters pennies and when we finished a number they'd toss them up on stage. The audience was thus encouraged to toss money too. And all the while the orchestra would play "Pennies from Heaven". The MC would pick them up while screaming about how *generous* everyone was. He'd bring the amount backstage to give each of us as we finished our spots and we'd divvy up ten percent to him as his commission.

I went out barrelhousing one evening, during intermission, and spotted Bobbi, a prostitute, who was also a customer at the Beauty Salon. She talked her John into giving me a five dollar tip. "He does my hair in the daytime, and works in the shows here at night," she told him.

"Oh, thank you, Precious," I said, as I shoved the bill down between my cleavage. "I'll *never* forget you for this."

They blinked the lights. Paul Rivers, the boss, came by and I hurried into the dressing room. Dean Miles had come down sick after the big raid. She wasn't *used* to all that fresh air!

They needed another dance spot and Paul asked me to do Dean's spot for an extra five dollars. I thought he meant another \$5 per night, but I found it was only \$5 for the whole week.

This started an argument between us. Paul had been drinking heavily. As he went out the door he grabbed at the ice-pick, from the doorjamb, and threw it at me. He missed by three feet. I whirled around and tossed a can of Max Factor powder at him. It went all over his suit.

Paul spied the nearby props. He grabbed a baseball bat and chased me around the dressing room. I headed for the stage entrance. I was nude on top, wearing a pair of men's corduroys, high heels, my wig off, and my make-up on. Marion Lane was singing a lovely, soft ballad.

I ran around back of him across the stage. Two seconds later followed by Paul with the baseball bat. I headed for the front of the Club. I saw Dusty Evening's yellow convertible in the parking lot. I jumped into the back and huddled on the floor into the

smallest heap I could make of myself. We'd always ridden to work in his "car pool" for a quarter a night. I was afraid to breathe. I was sure it was "curtains" for me!

An hour later I heard voices. "My gosh, where do you suppose Keni is?"

Someone else said, "He didn't have a shirt and he's got pumps on. . . ."

"Is Paul Rivers with you?" I whispered loudly.

They all huddled around me. "Stay down until we get out of here," Dusty said, as they jumped into the car. "You know how temperamental he is." We went home.

I was awakened the next afternoon at two o'clock. Tossy said, "It's for you, Keni."

"Who is it?" I asked in a stage whisper.

"It's Paul Rivers!"

"I don't want to talk to him," I said.

But I took the receiver. The voice on the phone said, "Baby, you aren't going to let a little thing like that *bother* you? You don't want something like this to interfere with our friendship? I'll see you at the show tonight, Honey, and we'll settle up on the money. Okay?"

Things calmed down, temporarily. I worked for five more months at the Club My-O-My. The argument had been "just one of those things."

One night, he said since we had so much repeat business he'd have to hire some new talent for the show. "You know, new faces. You've been with the show for about a year and a half." Some of the queens had been replaced from time to time but most of us had been there quite a while. I got the axe. I went back to the apartment and packed all my drags. It was moving-on time. But I didn't know where I was going.

I was still employed days at the Wohl Salon but my evenings were unemployed. Momentarily!

Company in the Front Parlor, Girls!

I MISSED the show. It felt strange not to have to go to the Club and get into make-up each night. I found myself going out to the Club just for drinks. I was like a lost dog. I talked with some of the boys about possibly getting another entertainment job somewhere else and wrote and wired other clubs around the country.

Tossy Wayne and I occasionally went to the movies and palled around when he wasn't busy with the show.

Dusty, the owner of the apartment building, didn't want me to leave town even though all the people who'd left the show had moved on and new entertainers were moving into the building.

One day Tossy came to the Salon to go to lunch with me. As we were walking on Canal Street a Gulf wind came up, blowing off his yachting cap. His naturally curly shoulder-length black hair tumbled down. He calmly retrieved his cap, twisted his hair back under it, and we walked on. But the sight had caused considerable consternation among the passers-by. I told him since he was leaving the show I was giving up the large apartment and would take the small apartment in the rear.

I went back to work that afternoon feeling blue and miserable. Bobbi came in to have her hair done. The girls where she worked often came in during the afternoons, as did Sue, the Madam. I loved doing Madam Sue's hair because she was such a *lady*. She was tall, about forty years old, buxom, and built like the proverbial outhouse. She usually wore a Lili Ann suit, Kolinsky scarf and good jewelry. She was an American Indian and had amazingly fine, fascinating facial bones. She always reeked with expensive odors. She wore her black hair parted in the center, pulled back

into a twisted figure eight. She had a long white streak that ran dramatically through the entire length of it. Sue was stunning and carried herself like a Queen. She never used a vulgarity and always looked like the finest society matron one could imagine.

Sue would occasionally bring in a "new" girl and ask me to "improve" her. The new girls usually looked fresh off the farm and were badly dressed. She seated them at my station, standing behind to look at them in the mirror, saying, "Mr. Kenneth, I would like to have you do something *soft* for her. I'd like something natural looking to go with her features. She has good features, don't you think? But it needs to be kept soft around the shoulders. And help her with her makeup. But keep it soft tones. I'll be back in about an hour. Now nothing too extreme! Remember, keep it natural." She always spoke pleasantly and with dignity.

She came back in an hour to take the girl to Gus Mayer's and Maison Blanche to select a wardrobe. The clothes were in excellent taste. When her clients took a girl to dinner, she looked like a young executive's wife, far from the public conception of a prostitute or street-walker.

I told Bobbi I had been let go, at the Club. "I'd like to find a job in the evenings. With the way I spend money I wish I could find another evening job."

She contemplated a minute, then said very quickly, "Have you ever thought about being a hairdresser in a whorehouse?"

"What?"

"Well, you know, since the girls get messed up a little during the course of the evening . . . a hairdresser'd come in damned handy. My God, the girls'd just love it and I know Sue'll say, "Yes", and you'll make ten times the money you're making here or even when you were working at the Club. And, Honey, if you keep *me* looking decent, I'll be making more money. Some of those truck drivers are so *rough* . . . you can't *imagine* what us girls go through!"

"You don't think Sue will mind?" I asked seriously.

"Why, *no*!! And you'll just look like one of the tricks coming

each night. Why don't you come down about seven this evening? All the girls will be there and I'll tell them about the idea. You know, you already know most of the girls."

She gave me the address. . . . It was on Orleans Street.

I drove over in a cab. The driver kept looking at me in the mirror. Probably wondering if he was going to make a commission, I mused.

We pulled up on Orleans Street. It was a boarded up three-story warehouse, with a canopy over the walk to the door! The street was very dimly lit. And across the street, at the corner, was the Third Precinct Station.

The driver got out, opened the door, and followed after me. I knew they were not usually *that* polite, not even in the South. I paid him at the curb but he followed me up to the door. My knees were shaking. I'd never before gone to a cathouse.

There was a solid door and the cabbie reached up near the top, at one side, and rang a buzzer. We waited for a second. The door was opened very gently by Dorothy, a heavy-set, colored maid in uniform.

We walked down a carpeted hallway and at the end was a mirror and console table with a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers in the center. The light was soft, flattering. We'd gone about five steps when a neatly dressed, middle-aged woman appeared. The cabbie stopped and went into a room that had a small sign on it reading: OFFICE.

I stood there alone.

The woman cupped her hand to her mouth, turned toward the rear and loudly announced, "Company, girls! In the first parlor." Then she turned, opened a door and indicated that I was to go inside.

It was a large living room with several sofas and a half dozen finely upholstered occasional chairs. The room looked like it had been done by a decorator. She asked me to sit down. I was shaking and too afraid to open my mouth.

As the girls started to walk in, some of them recognized me and started to laugh and talk. One of them said, "My God, Keni, are you the trick?" And that was when I spotted Bobbi.

"Didn't you *tell* them?" I asked, almost desperately.

"I just got to work two minutes ago," she laughed. "I didn't have a chance to." The commotion brought both Madam Sue and the cab driver.

I said, "Didn't you tell them I was going to do their hair?"

The cabbie said, "You mean this ain't a John?"

Sue laughed. "Darling, you're out of luck on this one. Mr. Kenneth is going to be a hairdresser for my cathouse." The girls all began chattering at once and each of them wanted to be first.

They ushered me to a little dressing room in the rear where they kept their formals and make-up. It was almost like being back in the dressing room at the Club.

The ice was broken and my tension eased.

As I finished each one, they slipped me a buck or two. I finished combing all of them, for the time being. When I was done they all wanted to take me to see their individual rooms. One finally said, "Why don't we just show him *everything*." I got the Cook's tour of the place.

There were several dozen private bedrooms, each more or less decorated with personal items by the girls themselves, three parlors, the restrooms and a very large room which was called "The Bar".

We all went in. There was a juke box at one end with a small dance floor. The bar was at one side, presided over by another colored woman named Lady. On one wall was a sliding panel, opening to Madam Sue's office.

The girls wanted to buy me drinks. They were afraid I would leave now that I'd finished the comb-outs. They were being overly solicitous and generous in order to keep me around.

Dorothy said, "How many you gals gonna eat t'nite? I brought black-eyed peas, hot rice and southern-fried chicken. You know Miz Sue said you gals don't eat right you gonna come down sick."

"Oh, you're not really interested in our health," one of them commented. "You only want the dollar!"

That tickled Dorothy, even though she meant what she'd said.

"Have *you* eaten, Keni?" one of them asked.

"Well, no. I came right from the Salon," I said.

"Well, com'n. I'll treat you tonight. Lady and Dorothy always bring the food for us every night."

"I'm sure glad they do," Ginger said. "I sleep all day and I'm *still* so tired."

One of them looked at her, boredly. "Oh, you even screw tired," she commented.

Madam Sue put her face to the panel opening. "Mr. Kenneth, come in and see my office." I walked around through the hall and went in.

She was seated at a very feminine desk in a small room. She had an open book on it with the girls names in a row and how much commission they had coming marked next to each name. She wore black horn-rimmed glasses and looked very businesslike. There was a chair next to the desk and she asked me to sit down and have a cigarette.

Madam Sue re-assured me this was going to work out well. There'd be no salary—"But I'm *sure* the girls will be very generous to you. Some of them get *so* messed up. If any of the girls aren't generous, you just let me know, Love."

While we were talking, the doorbell rang. I heard Betty yell, "Company, girls!" There was a great rustling of taffeta. The door closed and it was quiet.

The cabbie came in and talked to Madam Sue as if he knew her well.

After a couple of minutes, I asked, "What's that black box?"

"An intercom."

"An intercom?"

"Yes, so I can talk to each room and tell them when their time's up." The large clock was ticking away on the wall opposite her. She glanced at it. It was 9:15 P.M.

The cabbie just seemed to wait around. On top of the intercom was a stack of folded paper towels and jars of Vaseline. I didn't ask what they were for.

She got busy asking the cabbie about the crowds on Bourbon Street. And if there would be much business "tonight". She said, "I wish you'd speak to your old lady. She should get some sleep. She's getting bags under her eyes!"

"I'll beat her if she doesn't bring home any loot in the morning," he replied. "I'm gonna get me a new Cad, you know."

About this time a young blonde, Jackie, burst in, threw \$20 on the desk and Sue handed her a paper towel and a jar of Vaseline.

"I don't need the Vaseline," the girl said and left.

The other girls went back into the bar. Madam Sue opened a drawer, wrote the cab driver's name down, gave him \$8 and put the balance in the cashbox.

"Things are getting kind of busy," I said. "I'll go back to see if any of the girls need me."

"Okay, Doll. If you get sleepy tonight just grab a bed and lie down for awhile. You'll be *safe*. I'll have a maid wake you if you're needed."

I went back into the Bar. There were men in the room now. Several of them glanced at me, and thinking I was probably just another paying customer, ignored me. I said to Faye, "How come that man didn't go to the parlor and pick out one of the girls like the rest," indicating a man in a grey suit.

"He did, Honey, I just got done with him. He's gonna wait around and regain steam and pick out somebody else."

The door bell kept ringing. There was a lot of activity. I was all eyes and wide awake.

I asked Ginger, "What does your husband think, you going to bed with these guys? How come he lets you do it? I'd think you'd have to be single to do a thing like this."

She looked at me with incredulity. "My old man's a cab driver, Honey, down on Bourbon Street. See, all the cabbies sit on the fenders of their cabs and ask if a guy wants some nice action. Then when a guy gets in the cab my old man brings him here. On the way here he says, 'They got beautiful girls down there.' And, 'Man, they got nice ones down there. There's one gal who's the hottest piece in the world—you just ask for Ginger, man. She's the hottest piece they got down there.' They don't know I'm his 'old lady,' see. And we *both* get a slice."

"What do you mean, you *both* get a slice?"

"Every time a cabbie brings a trick he gets forty per cent, the girl who gets picked gets forty, and the house pockets twenty—

simple!" She laughed. "It's just simple arithmetic. So figure it up. Me and my 'old man' make eighty per cent that way. *He* should care who I go to bed with! He beats me up if I don't get picked."

I shook my head. "What do you have to do for your forty?"

"Anything! Everything has a price, Honey."

"You mean you have a *price list*?"

"Well, they don't keep it *posted*, Sweetie. You have to sort of learn that by heart. You play it by ear. Take what the traffic will bear. It's ten dollars and up. And it better be *up*! The *cheapest* date is ten dollars," she tapped me on the knee, knowingly, "and that's really a quickie."

I knew what she meant.

"I average anywhere from \$100 to \$150 a night," she added, matter-of-factly.

My mouth was wide open.

"Honey, you'll learn a lot in here. Why, I was only thirteen when my 'old man' met me. He broke me in. You can't work here unless you got an 'old man' to keep you in line. There ain't many places you can work if you're an *outlaw*."

"What's an outlaw?"

"A single girl that hustles that ain't got no pimp to hustle her."

"Oh, you have to be married?" I asked.

"Well," she smiled, "living *with* somebody, or in some pimp's stable. Some guys keep more than one girl, you know. Danny, the boss, he's got *three* horses running. And they all work here. They're what we call sister-in-laws."

"Company, girls!" Betty called loudly. The Bar emptied in seconds of all the working girls. I sat alone with Lady. She smiled kindly.

They weren't gone long. Minutes later the door re-opened and they were back. Lillian was walking down the hallway to her bedroom with the John and singing, "Here Comes The Bride."

"What the hell's *that*?" I asked.

"Oh, she does that every time she gets a trick."

Someone else shot in, "She better . . . she's on her last year at this place."

And another added, "This place . . . *any* place!"

"How old *is* she?" I asked.

"Thirty-two," Ginger said. "You retire *young* in this game, Honey."

From time to time I combed hair again. It was five o'clock and we got ready to go home. As I left, cabs were lined up and down the street in front. The guys came in and got their "broads" with their palms outstretched. Each girl opened her purse and pulled out a wad of money to turn over to her pimp. Then she'd get in his cab to go home. It was a living. Just like any other job, for them.

Jackie and her "old man", Freddy, gave me a lift home.

I was exhausted. It had been a *different*, and difficult, night.

I counted my money. I was doing fine—\$38 in the Kitty. But the hours were longer than at the Club My-O-My. I thought about that for a moment, but only a moment. I was soon fast asleep.

I got up at eight in the morning. I had to be at work at the Salon by nine. After three days of working on Orleans Street I had to call in sick to the Salon, in order to get enough sleep. Twenty-one and twenty-two hour days were a little more than I had bargained for and something would have to be done.

That evening a cabbie came in to see if Madam Sue could provide a boy for one of his fares.

"Gosh, no, I don't have any boys this season. The only boy around *here* is Mr. Kenneth. I don't know if he'd be . . . wait here a minute."

She came back to the dressing room. "Mr. Kenneth, come here a minute." As we walked into the office she said, "I hope you won't mind my asking this. We have someone who wants a boy, and he . . . well, you don't *have* to do it. But—you'd be paid the regular commission just like one of the girls." She went on trying to see if I would "help out."

Here I was—just one of the girls again.

I shrugged. "Yeah, I don't care. . . ." I was willing to try. I'd hustled around when I needed some change but never charged any fee or definite price because I went to bed only with people who appealed to me.

"Well, try it once," Madame Sue said, "and we'll see how things work out. Oh, and by the way, since you don't know how to talk price, I'll speak to the John and arrange the price."

She took me into the parlor where he sat all alone. Madame Sue did all the talking. He wasn't exactly my cup of tea, but what the hell, I was going to be paid for it so his looks didn't matter much. I'd awakened from being on a drunk, from time to time, and some of what I opened my eyes to then looked worse.

She bluntly told him the cold facts. Ten dollars for fifteen minutes, twenty dollars for a half hour, and one hundred dollars for the night."

"Will he do *everything*?" the man wanted to know.

Madame Sue glanced at me. "Yes, of course!"

She told me to go to bedroom 4 as she took the twenty dollars from him. As we went down the hallway, she said, "I'll buzz you, Mr. . . . a . . . Frenchy!"

What had she said? I cocked my head and thought about it for a second, without stopping. Then I glanced back at her.

In the room, we disrobed and got on the bed. A couple of minutes later I had my trousers on and, shoulders back, head up, I walked majestically into the office.

"Could I have some Vaseline?" I announced, quietly. Madame Sue smiled broadly.

After Madame Sue called, "Your time is up," on the Intercom, I started dressing and he asked, "Who do I ask for when I come again?" I looked at him a moment and remembered her parting remark.

"Oh, just ask for Frenchy, that's *me*. I'm here every evening from seven to five in the morning."

I returned to the Bar.

"Well! Aren't *you* the one!!!"

Bobbi said, "You know, we've just had us girls here till now and we've been putting on shows . . . and we could do so much more with you in the show."

"We can use Keni!" Lillian threw in.

"I think my name is *Frenchy*. . . ." They all laughed. I said, "Oh, I can watch!"

"Watch? Hell, Honey, you're the one who's going to be the *man* in the show!" Bobbi stepped up to the panel and told Madame Sue about the idea.

She walked around to the Bar and told Bobbi, Lillian and my self to come to one of the bedrooms with her. The four of us went to Bedroom 4. Dorothy had changed the linen and everything was neat. It was to become *my* room.

Madame Sue said she could use a "Call Boy" if I wanted to work. "I'll just tell the cabbies we now have girls, boys, and shows, and you'll get business. The reason we haven't done this for awhile is because I haven't had a boy working for some time now. So, girls, you might as well break *Frenchy* in. Show him how to do a show, just as you would with one of the new girls. Oh, and how to search for diseases. And how to hustle for more money."

She turned to me and ran through a list of sexual activities. "Do you. . . .?"

I nodded, willingly, at each *verb*.

As she walked out the door she shrugged, and said, "Huuuummmmmmmmm, more money!"

The girls were wearing strapless formals with full skirts. They unzipped them and as they dropped they were in the nude.

"Well, take your clothes off. We can't show you anything with your clothes on."

I was embarrassed.

"I've never taken my clothes off in front of *girls*," I said.

"We *know* it," they both laughed.

Bashfully, I removed my clothes. As Bobbi watched, she said, "Honey, you'll find it saves a lot of time on rush nights if you forget those boxer shorts. Well, where'll we begin?"

"Why don't you tell him what to say . . . because *he* should do the talking since he's the *man*," Lillian commented.

"*You* tell him what to say, and we'll try it," Bobbi stated.

Lillian stood up and Bobbi and I were spraddled out on the bed. Lillian began.

"Okay, now the audience is sitting over here to watch. We're gonna have sex for them while they watch us. Frenchy, the idea is to get them *hot* enough . . . to make them want to go to bed with us when we finish, so *we'll* get more money!"

"Oh, all right. I'm getting the picture. What happens?"

"Sue'll always let us know how much the show costs. That's what decides how *deluxe* we'll make it, and how *long* we make it." Now she turned to where the Johns would be sitting.

"Okay, boys, sit back and relax. We're going to show you a show you've *never seen* before, and never *will*, again. We're going to show you twenty-seven, yes, I said twenty-seven different ways to have sexual intercourse . . . in case you want to learn how to do these things with . . . your wife, or . . . your lover . . . or, maybe . . . one of *us*."

She embellished some of the words of her little "introduction" using soft and sexy tones. "We'll show you how two lesbians have sex together. What two boys do together. How to have sex with your wife when she's pregnant. How the Texans have sex. How to have sex in the back of the car while you're watching out for the cops!" She went on down the list.

They started showing me, one by one, the various ways but it all spelled out the same old thing—SEX, just in different *positions*.

Then Bobbi said, "Now we'll show you a few maneuvers." I looked pale.

The moment they started the act Bobbi arched up into the air, twisting and bending, groaning and making wild little noises deep in her throat. Lillian hadn't even touched her, although I could not see Lillian's face. I was so surprised by the action I stood up to watch.

As they finished she said, "*See?*"

I nodded.

"It's just a show," she continued. "We act like there's a lot going for us. . . ."

"Now, as soon as I finish with her," Lillian added, "we'll switch, and you join us."

I *softly* laid on top of her.

Bobbi watched for a moment.

"Honey," she grinned, "do you think *somewhere* along in the act you could *manage* a *show of interest*?"

When we all stopped laughing, she added, "And while you're on her, I'll talk dirty."

"That always gets them horny, see? And one thing more that you can't fake, honey . . . you gotta handle our boobs.

She cupped a breast and said, "Okay, doll, put it there." Afterwards they had me get back on the bed to show me how they'd work on me. Then they demonstrated how I was going to learn to be a world traveler. In the demonstration, I played the part of the world.

"Now, just before we close the show, we always do some tricks."

Bobbi mentioned a few tricks involving picking up objects. They were tricks I thought impossible but both girls had good muscles.

"Now, that wasn't so bad, was it, Frenchy?"

"Nope," I agreed.

"Now, about the dates . . . the first thing they want to know is how much it's gonna cost 'em. Tell them it's ten dollars for fifteen minutes. But don't work *fast*! You see, if you work slow enough they can't make their climax and they'll need more time and you tell 'em the extra time costs *more*. If *you* don't tell 'em their time's up and extra time costs more, Sue will, over the Intercom. You see?"

I nodded. *That* sounded practical. I was beginning to realize that I could make a good whore.

"First thing you do when they're undressed, Honey, is milk 'em like a cow. If it comes out milk, at all, turn 'em down. Go tell Sue he's *got* something . . . and he'll be ushered politely *out*. There's a basin over there. Make every one of them wash it off before he gets in bed with you. Some of these bastards *never* take a bath! And when you get in bed, *never* take your *shoes* off!"

"Why not?!"

"Oh, it's *bad luck*!" Lillian blurted out, with her brow furrowed. "I bet *I* know why it's bad luck . . . if we ever had a raid you could *run* faster!"

"That's not superstition," I said. "That's just good, common sense."

"I'll bet . . . going to bed with all these tricks . . . you catch the crabs a lot!"

"No! None of us do. Honey, we use larkspur blue ointment every day when we take our baths, just like you use a mouthwash every day. You just rub it on your privates every day and you'd be safe as a virgin."

The whole process was like going to school. But then I'd been a *student* for a *long* time.

"And whenever you get a date, try and work some of the others in. Say, 'So-and-so's a lot of fun!' You know? Try and work 'em in like that. Especially on slow nights—then we all get work."

Lillian nodded violently.

"That's about it," Bobbi said.

We dressed and went back to the Bar. Madame Sue informed us it would be a good time to have a talk with all of us.

"You all try to help 'Frenchy' get dates, girls. Oh, be sure to remember to call him '*Frenchy*.' If you get a date with a John, tell him that for five bucks extra you can have Frenchy sent in. Tell the trick, 'Let Frenchy come in and work on me. It makes me go *wild*!' That'll work the John up. Or, for \$10 he'll work both you and the John. Well, I don't have to tell most of you how to manage it. Use your imaginations. Frenchy will, of course, be working *all* the exhibitions.

Then she added, "Betty tells me there's been some dirty hustling going on in the parlors. You *know* I don't stand for this. Maybe some of you new girls don't know it but if *I* catch you, there's a five dollar fine! I'm sure *none* of you will want to pay five dollars because it's going to mean a black eye too, from your 'old man.'"

She surveyed the group, casually studying the faces. "I don't want to hear of any of you raising the eyebrows up and down with a come-on, wetting your lips with your tongue, putting your tongue in your cheek, taking deep breaths, flexing your cleavage, raising your formals to show your legs . . . any of these

things. Remember, you're all *ladies*! Even if it kills you!! And another thing, I don't want to hear any complaining you're not making as much as a three way girl. I can't help it if you want to stay *straight*. If you want to make more commission, you just have to learn to do anything in the book."

Well, things really began to pop in the old cathouse. The girls felt they owed me favors for doing their hair. A head would pop out of a door and a stage whisper called down the hallway, "Hey, *Frenchy*, come here!"

"Often enough," Madame Sue replied, "You'll have to *wait* 'til he's through!"

I said goodbye to the Beauty Salon. I loved my new position. And the cab drivers were doing a great business for me. I couldn't *possibly* have continued at the day job, too. I was now a Call Boy.

It wasn't always busy. Seems like it was either feast or famine. Saturday nights were usually slow, except for jerks. Saturday night was *jerk nite*. All the married men came during the week. Saturday nights for them were "with-the-family" nights. And the local men had Saturday night dates. The tourists always seemed to find plenty of other things to keep them occupied on Saturday nights.

Saturdays were often dull.

But I soon learned you didn't have to do too many customers to make a good evening out of any night. You needed only one good *live* one.

On nights when it was dull, we sat around and yakked. This gave us time to chat with one another, and we soon knew all about each other.

Everyone knew that Della was working her way through college. And that Betty had been an old *shutter-girl* in the French Quarter before she came to the house. During the Depression, girls like Betty sat in their rooms with the shutters half-open and ran a coin up and down the slats, to attract the attention of any passing male. "Want a nice girl? Twenty five cents!"

We found sitting around and waiting for business was the hardest part. One night we sat around for hours. Every time we had a long wait Madame Sue would make an appearance.

She had superstitions. She had ways of *making* business come in. Her two pet methods were eye-openers to *me*. But I was treated like any of the other girls.

Madame Sue passed a pair of scissors and an envelope around and each of us snipped off pubic hairs and put them into the envelope and passed it on to the next. When we were finished she would seal the envelope and put it in one of the large metal ashtrays, saying various Indian incantations over it, and light a match to it.

We all watched it disappear into smoke. And the place soon livened up!

Things were always *popping* one hour after the ritual.

I could never figure it out. Perhaps it was the words she uttered. Some strange voodoo.

Her other method was equally unusual. She brought in a mason jar and passed it around. As we came out of the rest room we would give it to the next person in line.

When we had finished we marched, in a body, to the front door. Madame Sue opened it wide and we stood in a circle behind her. She'd say her *magic* words and throw the ingredients out into the street!

I used to swear some of it hit the Third Precinct Station, down the block!

This worked too. In fact, it seemed to bring business faster than it brought the flies.

It had its ups and downs but in general business was fairly good. Mardi Gras arrived while I was working for Madame Sue. And Since I had lots of costumes, Lillian, Bobbi, Jackie and I decided to dress and go out for the day.

Lillian went in my gypsy costume. Bobbi wore my Cooch dancer outfit, and Jackie went in my Hawaiian costume. I went in a Roaring 20's fringe dress and a cloche hat.

They came over to dress at my place. When we came out of the apartment there were throngs of people in costumes, milling around the area. We started the day about eight in the morning and headed for Canal and Bourbon streets. It was a wonderful, sunny day.

Mardi Gras always reminded me of one thing: it was like celebrating Hallowe'en, New Year's Eve, and your Birthday all at one time.

Canal and Bourbon streets were where all the *action* was, during the holiday. Crowds were already beginning to gather by the time we arrived. By noon it was so packed with humanity it took two hours to traverse one block.

The milling crowds were gay and with only one thought in mind: to have a good time! It was impossible to *move* without hands groping you all over. I must have caused a hell of a lot of surprises as we moved along. As always in such situations, people who weren't in costume wanted to be around those who were.

There were all kinds of costumes. At one point we saw a Negro who was dressed as a Chinese coolie complete to the slanted eyebrows.

We found some Johns from among the crowd to buy us drinks, and we went from one bar to another. Before we knew it, seven o'clock had arrived which meant back to the work bench.

Bobbi asked what I was going to do the next day. She had to take a little trip and asked if I would join her. I hadn't been out of town for ages so I thought it would be fun. She didn't want to go alone, she said, and would pay my way.

We flew from New Orleans to Mobile. From Mobile we hired a taxi and drove to a little village of perhaps forty houses. It was called Hairpin Turn.

The taxi fare came to \$60. We drove into town and there were mounds of sawdust three stories high. It was a milling community in the backwoods. We drove up to a little unpainted, ramshackle house with a weather-beaten, picket fence and grass a foot high in front.

Bobbi, in her suit and fur stole, got out and walked up the dirt path. Her sister came out to embrace her. She had on a calico dress that had evidently seen better days.

"By God, it's so good to see ya, Sugah. There's mail for ya," she said. "I suppose that's why ya come. We've been so *worried* about ya. Well, there's six 'lotment checks here for ya."

They chatted for about five minutes. Then Bobbi returned to

the taxi and we drove off to the local bank where she cashed the checks.

We taxied back to the airport in Mobile. Bobbi was in a very happy, different mood now, and *loaded* with cash. There would be a wait for the plane, we were told, so we went into town on a shopping spree. Money flowed like water.

She bought me a sport shirt, slacks, and a sport coat. On the way back to New Orleans she asked me if I would be her "old man".

"Oh, you don't have to worry. You wouldn't have to make the scene with me. I want to dump that guy I'm carrying. But I can't work there without an old man. I'm sick and tired of him. I need him like I need a hole in the head."

But I didn't think it would be a good idea.

We came back to the cathouse with all the bundles, bags and hat-boxes and everybody got excited. They wanted to know about the trip. Bobbi wine and dined everybody in the place.

We were back in the swing of things and working again. Little did I realize that this was to be not only my lucky day but my very lucky night. About ten o'clock a cab driver brought in a man who picked me. He had a friend with him.

He bought me, for the night, and we picked out a girl for his friend. I suggested Bobbi.

We were picked for the night to go out to dinner and the *works*. "We're going *out*!" we shouted to the girls in the dressing room as we hurried back to change clothes. I got dressed in my new duds from Mobile, went to the parlor to negotiate with my newfound friend and turned the money in to Madame Sue.

"Where do you want to go?" the John asked.

We went to the Country Club for a couple of drinks to start things rolling. Then it was dinner for four, at the Court of Two Sisters.

The evening was still young, so I said, "Let's go to the Club My-O-My to see the floor show!"

"That's a wonderful idea!" Bobbi added, brightly.

We'd been sipping one drink to their three all through the evening. They thought they would be able to get us drunk but

you can't trump a couple of experienced whores. Meanwhile, *they* were getting pretty lushed.

We got a good front table and began living it up during the third show. Every time a performer came out I'd get dollar bills from my John to throw up to the performer.

"I just *love* that song," I kept saying, as the band played "Pennies from Heaven". Dusty Evening had gone back and announced, "Miss Keni's out there with a *live* one!"

When our Johns were fairly blotto we left the Club and mine suggested we check into a Hotel for the night.

"Fabulous!" I declared, hanging onto him, mostly to keep him from falling on his face in the street. "Let's go!"

Bobbi whispered to the cabbie, "Madame Sue's, please."

When we arrived back, the John said to Madame Sue, "Hey, lady, we'd like two rooms for the night."

She dug the scene immediately and treated us like total strangers. In her best "hotel clerk" manner she said she had a pair of adjoining rooms we would like. She took us upstairs and went into the rooms, leaving the adjoining door open.

They wanted to "go to bed" so Bobbi explained to them that the \$200 for the "whole night", was for our *companionship* and didn't cover "bed". When she explained it would be another \$50 each for the "bed" work, he peeled off a hundred dollar bill from a roll and handed it to her as he passed out.

We checked her bedroom. Her John was in a deep slumber of his own. Bobbi looked up at the intercom and said, "What time is it?"

A voice came back, "4:30".

"That's great," she said. "Come on!"

We went out of the rooms, shutting the doors behind us, and returned to the office to see if we could knock off early.

The Johns were awakened about 5:30 A.M. and told it was *after* closing time and they were booted out. It had been a *fun* day, and *night*!

The following evening found us a little shorthanded. Three of the girls were sick. *Grandmother was in town* and that was al-

ways good for a three day rest for the girls during menstruation.

I wasn't so fortunate. I rarely managed a night off.

I don't know what there was about it. The men who came didn't want *plain* sex when they *paid* for it. They wanted it to be just a little bit different.

Like the one who wanted us to tie him up and beat him. That *excited* him. Or the guy who thought he could handle four of the girls in one round of sex. And he probably couldn't satisfy his own wife at home. Or the truck-driver who came in frequently and wanted to get into the girls' formals and have them perform acts with him to give him the feeling he was the "girl". And many a John who came in with his lunch pail, directly from work.

But the one I remember most vividly was the customer who came one night with a small attache case. He had picked Faye for a partner and they went into a bedroom. We all knew something *different* was going on in that room, from the squeals of laughter we could hear.

She "worked" Della and Ginger in on the date. They were in there for an hour and a half when the door opened and Della called for me.

As I opened the door, the girls were all hunched down in various parts of the room. They were all laughing and howling. One of them was on her hands and knees. In front of her was the John, on *his* hands and knees.

"Here's \$20, *Frenchy*. Go turn this in and hurry right back," Della instructed.

As I was removing my clothes I said, "What do you want me to do?"

"Get on your hands and knees and join the rest of us. We're chasing him around the room. He wants us to grab that feather out of his ass, with our teeth!"

"Dorothy's making us some knee pads right now, out of Kotex. So, don't get *too* busy before she gets back with them." This last was whispered to me. And, she added, "Honey, my knees are *killing* me."

Every once in a while Ginger would stand up and say, "Let's

all have a drink!" We all stopped and Lady brought in a tray of refreshments. We chased and we drank and we chased and we drank. We turned in more money, and we'd chase and we'd drink.

Finally, Ginger, wouldn't you *know* it, caught up with him. He was half on-the-bed and half on-the-floor, going over and almost escaping. The whole time nobody had been chasing *too* hard. As soon as she snapped it out he had his climax. That ended *that*.

There were so many varieties you never knew what anybody would want and, sometimes, you were afraid to *ask*!

I remember one night when I was picked, Madame Sue called, "Your time is up!" on the Intercom, before the John had reached his climax. As I climbed off the bed he threw a heavy shoe at me.

I held my bloody head, with the palm of my hand, and yelled, "HELP!" out of the door. Fortunately, things were booming and five of the pimps rushed in, threw him and his clothes out the back door, rather noisily, and unceremoniously.

All at once a whistle blew. Everyone started screaming, "It's a *RAID*!"

Everyone started running but there wasn't any need. The police had plenty of coverage surrounding the place. They took all of us down to the First Precinct Station. I could never figure out why they didn't just march us across the street?

Our boss paid the fines and we were back working in less than forty-five minutes. Business dropped off some because of the raid.

When we were at the Station, Bobbi whispered to me to say that I was a "visitor" at the place, so I would be booked as a John and *not* as a prostitute. The fine was a lot *less*.

Everybody had their own version of what happened and the dressing room and parlors were buzzing with conversations. The whistle blew again.

"It's a *RAID*!"

They were banging at the doors and the place was surrounded again. But we were back at work in an hour.

Some of the girls started going home. A group of them were

gathering up their things and the boss suggested we better *all* just knock off for the night. Before we could leave, the Police were back for the *third* time.

Danny, the boss, said, "I can't afford much more of this tonight." He'd spent a couple of thousand dollars bailing us out. "I'm going broke."

When we got out this time we all went directly home. Nobody went back to Orleans Street.

The following morning there was much communication among all of us, phone calling and trying to find out what to do, what was going *on*.

Some Senator from Tennessee, a Senator Kefauver, was in town, and was putting on a campaign to close out all vice. The house was closed down.

The raids were all the news in the papers, on the radio, and over television. Kefauver was after gambling and all organized crime. He was cleaning up *everything*.

The girls were leaving town in every direction—by plane, train, bus and automobile. But as we were accustomed to the pay-off raids, some of us hung on, in hopes the house would re-open. I waited around about a week. We were told New Orleans had *had* it. I had *had* it, too.

It would be good to get back to a *normal* existence. I called Gita Gilmore, who was working drag at Finocchio's in San Francisco. I asked if there was an opening.

"No, there's nothing at Finnochio's right now," he said, "but there's a *new* club opening called The Beige Room. I'm almost *sure* if I talked to Chickie, the owner, you could get on. No promises, but I'll see what I can do."

I called Chickie at the Beige Room and was informed he hired only by audition. I had no other immediate prospect, so the only thing left to do was fly to San Francisco. Excited by the prospect of San Francisco, I could have made the trip without the plane.

But I went downtown and bought a ticket. And flew West.

Get That Boy Off My Floor!

UPON ARRIVAL, I went right to Gita's apartment. It had been a long time since we were in Calumet City. There was so much "dishing" to be done. We had to "catch up" with all the latest dirt. We talked and talked by the hour.

Then another cab arrived. T. C. Jones was just coming in from New York City. We sat around, the three of us, watching the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on television, and discussing our careers.

T. C. had been a ministry student for two years at Bethany College when he decided to go into show business. He started as an MC, which he always called Mental Case. Then he was told the club where he worked was being turned into a female impersonator cabaret. He went to the Actors Thrift Shop in New York City and selected a basic black costume. He was black from toe to top—the top being not a hair wig but one constructed of black feathers. He became an immediate success.

We were discussing living conditions when Gita said he'd noticed a vacancy sign at the corner of Sacramento and Polk street, announcing an apartment, semi-furnished. T. C. said, "Let's walk over and look at it. Maybe one of us might take it."

It was a large brick building. We went to the manager's office. She said, "There's no elevator to *that* apartment. You'll have to walk." We looked at one another.

She unlocked a door. We were led down a flight of stairs to a landing, turned and went down another flight of stairs to another landing, and still another flight of stairs. The three flights of stairs had taken us into the depths of the building.

There was a large, long hallway ahead of us. It ran through the

whole apartment. In fact, it was *most* of the apartment. To the left was a small room with a metal bedstead and a couch which served as both the living room and the bedroom. At the other end of the hallway, on the same side, was a *smaller* room. This was the kitchen.

The bedroom had two little windows up near the ceiling and the kitchen had one tiny, long and narrow window at the top with bars. As you looked out through the bars you would see the shoes of the people walking down the street.

"Where's the bathroom?" T. C. asked.

"Oh, that's on the second floor," she informed us.

We eyed the place and I finally inquired, "What kind of rent are you asking?"

"\$22 a month, in advance."

T. C. looked at me and we both said, "We'll take it!"

We got a cot from the Salvation Army store for my bed and installed it in the hallway, which was under the main entrance and had a ceiling at a 45° angle. There really wasn't much in the way of furniture in the "furnished" apartment.

So with some toss pillows, a couple of large plants, some gold-framed pictures, drapes and soft lightning, we were in business, or at least had a place to sleep.

T. C. already had a contract at the Beige Room. I called Chickie and told him I was in town. He said, "I'd ask you to come for your audition tonight, but we have a new act tonight and it may be pretty *hectic*." And he added, "T. C. Jones is opening tonight."

"I know," I said. "We're sharing an apartment."

That made a difference. "Well . . . come on down and we'll audition you sometime tonight during the show." Out came the *fans*, all six feet of them!

Francis Blair, whom I'd also worked with in Calumet City, was working the show. It was fun being with some of the old gang, and working drag, again.

T. C. had lots of friends. His days were spent with them. My days were spent going to the movies.

I loved the movies. It wasn't the expensive theatres I'd go to

but the downtown, second-run places—these were the best. They were excellent cruising grounds.

It was always best to sit in the back few rows, usually on the lefthand side as you entered, or in the back of the balcony.

The routine I used was to sit one seat over from the aisle with my outer garment over my lap. It didn't matter how many vacant seats there were on either side to place it on. It was convenient to have it over my lap, especially if my hands were cold. Or anything else.

The coat over the lap, or the arm, was convenient for romance. There was lots of hand-holding, which led to other romantic activity.

Intermission was convenient because the lights went up and you could *see* who was sitting next to you. Sometimes it was a shock. And too, you could make a mental check and see where the *interesting*-looking people were sitting throughout the theatre. It didn't guarantee they would be sitting in the same seats after the lights went out. But you could keep shifting around until you checkmated.

Some people must have had weak kidneys because they went back and forth to the rest rooms so frequently. I used to think people would wear their hair out standing in front of the mirror, combing and spying. Many washed several layers of skin off their hands in one night.

Some movie viewers insisted on striking up immediate conversations. "Is this seat taken?"

Or, "Mind if I sit here?"

And, "How long's this feature been on?"

When two queens found three empty seats between them and didn't want to make a spectacle of moving, they would play touch-toe. And it was sometimes a problem stretching the leg all the way over.

Sometimes my legs cramped so much I had to get up to go to the restroom just to stretch out my muscles.

When we sat next to each other we'd play kneesies. Our legs occasionally got so entangled, if we'd had to get up and leave in

a hurry, for a fire, we'd never have made it as far as the popcorn stand!

But what was so obvious was when the place was deserted and there would be only one person in an area of six empty rows of seats, the next doll who entered always took the seat exactly *next* to him.

When people couldn't seem to find anything they particularly wanted to sit next to through the entire film, they'd shift. And they'd shift and shift. I called it playing checkers.

Some theatre-goers must have worn out two dozen seats per feature.

One afternoon I was sitting in back, lefthand side, when a very nice blond sat next to me. I was actually engrossed in the film, for a change, when I felt a hand on my thigh. The hand then roved over my pocket and abdomen and was traveling south. I reached down, took his hand and put it back on his lap. I leaned over, whispering, "Not here. Would you like to go for a cup of coffee?" We left the theatre.

We were half through coffee when I realized he was looking for a listener—not just a bed partner. There are many lonely people who want to talk about their problems. I suggested we go to my apartment.

My roommate wasn't coming home for dinner so I fixed dinner for the two of us. Don had just left his wife, he said, since he'd found out he was a latent homosexual. He'd been exposed to it, in the Navy, and had been recently "brought out." The problem precipitated his leaving his wife.

Don had been a dance instructor in Texas and he came West, hunting for a job. We finished dinner and went to bed. He was most compatible.

After two hours it was time to get up and go to the Club. Don agreed to meet me after work. He picked me up after the last show and we went back to the apartment for breakfast, and talked about his future.

He spent the morning, which was my night.

In the afternoon we got up and I told him "I have a friend where

you might be able to make a few bucks to tide you over until you get a decent job." I called Arnold, a photographer.

He said, "Bring the boy over."

Don became a physique model.

While we were lining this up, we went to a dance studio and he applied for a job. He was hired to teach the ladies how to dance.

After Don was "on his feet" I didn't see much of him. Destitution often brings strange bedfellows but when the going's good one finds new friends and interests.

Weekends, I treated myself to the YMCA. The Embarcadero Y was the most interesting place in town. It was the country club of the homosexual set. Many of the San Francisco crowd went there for weekends. It got difficult to book a reservation—it was so packed. Sometimes you had to wait several weeks just to get in.

A lot of sailors and marines who knew what they were looking for and where they could find it, went there. When they had cash they went out with girls they could pick up. But if they needed cash they could always spend a few hours at the Y and hustle the queens to raise a little cash to take girls out. A lot of servicemen are from small towns and only join the Services to get away from home, I soon learned through my experiences at the Y.

While I was working at the Beige Room, I got tired of going to the Y, and the movies, and constantly cruising, and wanted something tangible to occupy my hours. I applied for work in a beauty shop.

I put on my suit, tie and best shirt and went to the City of Paris department store. The manager of the beauty salon said she didn't have an opening just then, so I headed for the Emporium department store. There I gave an audition and used the manicurist as my model.

By this time in my career I knew that if there was an opening in a shop I could get the job. For, to be a good hairdresser, all one had to be was a good salesman and to be a good salesman is nothing but being a damned good "hustler." It was just another *form* of hustling and I'd been doing that in one form or another most of my life.

There is hustling in every line of work. If someone brags he's a good—real crackerjack—salesman, he's saying he's nothing but a good hustler.

When I was asking men to buy drinks I was just *selling myself*. The same is true with hair dressing. It's just hustling your personality. If a customer was going to get a shampoo and set for \$6, I'd say, "You know, you're spending \$6 for a shampoo and set, and it's going to be "out" tomorrow. For another \$10 you can get a permanent that will last three months."

I sold an average of four permanents a day. I was hustling, but only in another area.

My hustling for permanents and other beauty care was not for the commission because I really didn't need the money right then. It was a searching for being acceptable. It was needing to be wanted.

I was at the Emporium about four months and working nights at the Beige Room. I was doing a permanent, one day, and I was sent for by the Personnel Office.

"He's right in the middle of a permanent," the boss said.

"He *has* to come, right *now*," Mrs. Bishton informed the manager. It seemed *terribly* urgent, so I hurried to her office.

"Mr. Kenneth, we think that you are working another job." She was very blunt and stern-looking. "Do you work in a nightclub as a female impersonator?"

I thought, why lie? "Yes, I do. But is there anything wrong with my work here?"

"No." She eyed me coldly. "But we can't have anyone who works in a place like that, with your kind of reputation, working in the Emporium."

"But I'm right in the middle of a permanent!" I said. It was the only thing I could think of at that moment.

"That's all right. Somebody else will finish it," she informed me.

"What if I leave the other job? Can I stay here?"

"No, that won't make any difference. We don't want any of *your kind* here." As far as she was concerned the conversation was through and so was my job.

This was the first time I had been ejected from a job because I was an entertainer. She was taking it for granted that all female impersonators are homosexual, which is a fallacy. I *knew* differently. But I didn't deny anything about myself. She didn't realize that the store was loaded with my kind, only they wore suits *all* the time, instead of gowns at night.

I went to report back to the manager, Mrs. Hars. She'd called in Mrs. James, the superintendent for all Northern California beauty salons for that chain.

Meanwhile, she had a girl finish the permanent I'd begun. She couldn't believe I wasn't allowed to come back to work. She was very upset.

She phoned upstairs and said, "I don't care *what* he does at night!" But it was no go.

Then Mrs. James asked if I would work in one of the chain's other shops. She had an immediate opening at Salt Lake City.

"I can't go," I told her. "I have a contract with the Beige Room so I'd better stay here in town." I felt better, knowing she was willing to help me.

There was nothing she could do about the situation at the Emporium. It was out of her hands. I gathered my things and left.

It was then I found a beauty shop across the street from my apartment. The owner's name was Connie and she owned three other beauty shops. I went in and asked for a job, telling her I had a "following", and many of my customers continued with me at the new shop. When I applied for the job I told her, "I'm a female impersonator at the Beige Room. Will that make a difference?"

"Frankly, I don't care what you do at night," she informed me. "As long as you're here on the job and you do good work."

T. C. would come across the street in the afternoons to ask what to "start" for dinner. One day when he came in, Connie asked, "Who's that?"

"My roommate, T. C. Jones. He's the star of the show at the Beige Room."

"What time's the show start?" she asked.

"Nine o'clock," I said.

That evening I went out to the bar after the first show to get a drink. Connie was seated alone at one of the tables. I spotted her and went over to join her.

Just then T. C. came over to the table. He sat down and we ordered fresh drinks.

The next day at the Beauty Salon, T. C. Jones walked in the door. Connie announced they were going to lunch. Late in the afternoon they waltzed back in.

The courtship was short.

There were a lot of parties. Before I knew it they were married. Blum's, the west coast's Schrafft's, catered the reception party.

I left town just before the wedding, because everything was happening so fast. My contract at the Beige Room ended without renewal. There wasn't an opening just then at Finocchio's, and I was losing a roommate. I was out, all the way around.

T. C. Jones moved on to New York City to open in Leonard Sillman's "New Faces of 1956" on Broadway.

The wires and calls started going again. I got a booking at the Garden of Allah in Portland for two weeks. Then to Curley's in Minneapolis, the Morrocan Village in New York, the Jewel Box in Miami, and the Candlelight Room in Houston.

I lost my youthful appearance. I had always been a stripper and instead of knowing I had to have fresh material and a new approach, perhaps comedy, I continued to do the same old act.

I finally got an audition at a bar. Not allowing me to strip, they asked me to do a character dance. Being unable to sing, I had to come up with a good character dance number. I decided it would be my Dutch Dance. I came onstage wearing six ruffled, white, starched petticoats, a black corset-cincher with laces, leg of mutton sleeved blouse and my golden wig with long braids and wooden shoes, and "I tiptoed through the tulips". My shoes were painted bright yellow with hand-design flowers for trim.

But, as I went into my number, the owner screamed, "Get that boy off my stage with those goddammed wooden shoes! I just paid a fortune for that new floor!" He didn't like my number.

Even after I suggested nailing rubber soles on my wooden shoes.

I was discouraged.

I called my aunt in Tipton. I was tired of living in small hotel rooms, tired of living out of suitcases. I was tired of promises, friends, people, and most of all tired of being broke.

"Why don't you come home where you belong?" she begged. "Quit this traveling around and settle down."

It seemed like the only solution. I sent my things home C.O.D. and hitch-hiked and box-carred back "home."

I was welcomed back with open arms. *Where* do you run when you quit running? I was in a small town again. People all seemed so real. I thought of large lovely cities but it made me do some soul-searching. Which is it better to be: a frog in a small pond or a frog in a river? You don't drown in a *small* pond.

There were all sorts of things I could do in Tipton. I could start a group and direct plays. I could open a children's dance studio. I could work in a beauty salon.

Being a small town there wasn't much immediate employment for me there, even if people *were* friendly and honest.

Forty miles away, in Omaha, there was lots of employment.

I applied for a job in the biggest department store in Omaha, Brandeis Department Store. I was hired without an audition. And I commuted back and forth every day. Grandfather let me use his car. Life began to seem worth while.

On several weekends I went to Des Moines to visit people I'd known and to see the old sights. There were many old sex partners to re-visit. And though many of them were now married, they were happy to go the rounds with me, again. But many of my buddies didn't appeal to me anymore. After traveling all over the country, my buddies didn't have the same attraction they had when I was a schoolboy.

Thank God I wasn't married to some of them, like their wives, and stuck with them, forever.

One evening my aunt was called on for help by the entertainment committee at the Presbyterian Church, for a party they were having.

"Well, my nephew's here. He's an entertainer. I'm sure he'll perform," she said.

I went to the record shop, got a copy of "In a Persian Market", and put on my oriental Princess outfit. I did my dance.

A month later, I was asked to do another routine, between acts, at the high school play. I did my "Mae West" comedy routine. I dressed at home, in an hourglass gown, feathers and a fur.

All the cars were in use, so, in high drag, I got in one of grandfather's diesel trucks and barreled down Main Street, to the schoolhouse. Now I wasn't the town sissy anymore. I was a *professional* entertainer. A little "mad", by *their* standards, but professional!

Grandfather thought that instead of making the long trip back and forth to Omaha each day, I should open a beauty shop in Tipton. I said I didn't have the cash. Grandfather went to the Bank, got the needed money and found a location. There were two rooms for rent, right over the First National Bank.

Out went the shingle again. It read:

KENNY'S SALON OF BEAUTY

I was very impressed. I had to charge local prices—\$1.25 for a shampoo and set. I knew that even though the rent was only \$26 a month, I wasn't going to get rich quick. However, with my location the best thing that could happen was for business to fall through.

And I was the only shop in town with a birdbath on the inside.

But I had a roof over my head and I was eating three square meals a day. I hadn't had that kind of security for years. That was what I sought—*security*.

I didn't know just how secure I was going to be until one day just six weeks after I opened my Salon. I received a letter that read:

"Greetings:

You have been selected by your friends and neighbors to protect and defend your country."

Who, *ME*?

Heavens, Yes, Mr. Sergeant!

WITH IMMEDIATE and patriotic emotion, to save the government some money, I went across the street to the barbershop and said, "Give me a very short crew cut."

After passing my physical in A-1 shape, in Des Moines, I was inducted at Fort Riley, Kansas and sent to Infantry boot camp at Camp Carson, Colorado. My "friends and neighbors" were located in Des Moines and I hadn't seen them for almost eleven years.

The first thing they did in Basic was give me another haircut, before giving me a uniform five sizes too large. They told me they were going to fatten me up, when I mentioned the large *size* factor.

But I got out the needle and thread. However, before I started stitching, I got some bleach and softened my clothes. I didn't want to look brand-new. I sewed military creases in everything, including my hat.

I took chains and put them inside my pants cuffs to hold them straight. I was going to be very sharp, and very G.I.

But everytime I turned around I was on KP. I didn't mind. I was very domestic and loved working in the kitchen. It was fixing food, setting table, cleaning up. I didn't think *that* was so bad.

We had to go to bed early but I was tired and ready. But going to bed wasn't as bad as getting up. To me it was the middle of the night, the hour I *used to* finish work!

They gave me a rifle. It was the first time I ever had a rifle in my hands. I don't think they realized it wasn't the enemy so much

who was in danger. Every night they had us strip down our rifles and clean them. I'd never managed to get the parts back together before lights out. The first time I worried all night about how I was going to get it together before inspection in the morning.

I asked the guy next to me if he'd "help" me. He did. By the fifth morning he told me to start learning to do it myself. But by then the Sergeant said we had to learn to do it in the dark. "You might have to be able to do it at night when you're on the front line!" he said.

Hell, I didn't even know how to do it in the *daylight*.

Trying to live up to military standards while being surrounded by all the men in the Company, I was terribly frustrated. I was *determined* to keep my hair *up* and play the role of a real soldier—make the family proud, and happy. I really set myself to it. But it wasn't as simple as it sounded.

At Inspection, the Captain asked for Inspection of Arms in front of me. Failing repeated nervous efforts to open the clip I lifted my right leg, rested the rifle butt on my knee and pulled the bolt back, successfully. Happily, I handed the rifle to him, but the Captain didn't take it.

He only stared at me, dumbfoundedly, and said, "Report to the O.D. Room, on the double!"

I reported to the Company Commander. I went in and he said, "What did you do before you got in the Service?"

I told him, "I was a hairdresser."

"You mean you cut women's hair?" he asked. "And call me, Sir!"

"Yes."

"Sir!"

"Sir."

"Well, then, cut mine," he said.

"I don't cut men's hair," I told him.

"Sir!"

"Sir."

"If you can cut women's hair, you can cut men's."

I cut it. Not very much, but I got it cut.

When I got back to the barracks the Sergeant questioned me. "What'd the old man say?"

"He asked me to call him, 'Sir,' and cut his hair," I said. "He was very nice."

"Do you cut hair?"

"Yes, of course! I'm a *barber*," I replied, neglecting to add how long.

He looked at me flatly for a moment, then added, "Do you know what we could do? I could put you in the Day Room and you could cut hair for the Company at a half a buck a head. *We* could put the money in a Kitty for a beer party."

Every day after that I went to the Day Room after Roll Call. The Sergeant sent men in every day. "You, you and you. You go get haircuts!" Sometimes some of the men got trimmed twice a week.

I never did finish Basic Training. When time came for the Company to be moved out someone discovered I had never fired a rifle. I was transferred back to Basic again, under the same Commanding Officer, who promised to keep an *eye* on me.

Saturdays were free with nothing to do so I went in to Colorado Springs and got a job in a beauty shop. While still in my uniform I walked in and asked if they needed a hair dresser. Never satisfied with one occupation, I had to have my usual two jobs going.

I was hired. But by the third weekend my extra curricular activity was discovered and I was *told* to quit.

In the second Basic Company they gave me a B-A-R machine gun to carry. I was sitting on so much cold ground during training that it irritated my colon and before long I was hospitalized.

The doctor said, "Son, you've got a *splendid* case of hemorrhoids there." Probing, he said, "We're going to try a new method to help you. We'll burn them out." With this I lost my widespread grip of my fingers on my cheeks!

For weeks I couldn't sit, stand, or walk. By the time I got out of the hospital, the *second* Company had left. I hadn't fired a rifle yet!

I started Basic all over again, with a new Sergeant and new Commanding Officer. And the third Company was all new recruits. I was just another name on the list. The new men had been in the Service for a week. I had been defending my country for nearly eight *months* by this time.

My new Sergeant was amazed at my ability to *catch on* to everything so *quickly*. Saluting, right flank, about face . . . I could almost put my rifle together by then. So I was placed in charge of the mailroom.

Summer had nearly arrived when we convoyed in trucks to Camp McCoy, at Sparta, Wisconsin. We arrived, finally, but it was a rugged trip.

Here they started to classify us. I *begged* to do clerical or hospital work. It seemed to me I would be suited for something like that. Or at least to manage the WAAC Beauty Salon. They decided I would be best at handling a machine gun. But—I *still* hadn't fired a rifle!

I got a weekend pass, went into town and got drunk. When I woke up in the morning in my civvies, I was six hours late. I couldn't fire a rifle, I hadn't been properly classified, I was depressed because I was sure I would be found out. I couldn't keep my pins up any longer—I took a powder. I up and *left*.

A week later found me on stage doing my act at the Club My-O-My in New Orleans.

And during the next nine months the memory of being in the Service began to dim in my mind. I nearly forgot I was A.W.O.L.

One night Erma, the cashier, said, "Two men from the F.B.I. were in looking for someone who has been A.W.O.L. for quite some time."

I quit the show.

I returned to Camp McCoy and turned myself in, but the guards at the gate didn't know the Company about which I was talking. My old Company had long since been shipped elsewhere.

They sent me back to Camp Carson, Colorado, and put me in the stockade. I was then court martialed.

In the stockade it was march, march, march, march.

Everybody wanted to march behind me, so they could watch my ass. They had spotted me for what I was and started calling me, "Queenie!"

During Roll Call, when they would call my name, before I could answer, some of them called out, "He's here, Queenie's *here!*"

Some of them had been in the stockade so long I was *good news*.

The inmates weren't about to let me do any manual labor either. Even when I *tried!* They were all supposed to be very *straight*. They wouldn't allow me to lift anything or do anything. But they tried to make me every time I turned around.

When I'd go to the showers, my audience suddenly had to shower, too. Sometimes I'd try to sneak a shower late at night but they found me. In time I was *afraid* to take a shower.

At one point I just skipped taking a bath for four days!

I wasn't afraid of them physically. Quite the opposite, they each wanted to be my "protector". I just wanted to be left alone.

My entourage would fight to stand next to me, to sit next to me at meals, to walk next to me. They were always breathing down my neck. They wanted to gain favor with me.

And I wasn't getting any sleep at night. They'd come and try to crawl in bed with me. Sometimes several at a time. And I argued with them to stop pursuing me.

It wasn't fun. I came to *hate* it.

When I was on a work detail, with another man, where it was private, it wasn't five minutes before he wanted to know if I would *do* him.

"Forget it, Charley," I'd say, and try to catch a few hours sleep. After finishing a work detail, when I could, I'd go to sleep for a few hours in the daytime. That was the only way I got any rest.

Then came the turning point of my life. Before this, sex had been fun and thrilling. This experience made it sordid, and dirty. It happened shortly after lights out.

I went to bed. But I felt strange. I sensed something was

wrong and I was very edgy but couldn't figure out what was the matter.

There was the usual talk when the lights went out. And now it was an hour and a half later. I was still awake, restless. My eyes trailed the dark around me.

Out of the quiet, whispers had begun. Some of the men were getting out of their beds. I wouldn't have paid attention to them if one or two had gotten up to go to the latrine. But they were getting up from all over the barracks and coming close, close to my bunk.

Some of them had put on their fatigue trousers, others were in their GI shorts.

They were all in the stockade, but they were all losers. They were inside for every reason in the book—weekend drunks, awols, guys who'd cussed out the commanding officer, men who refused to go on KP, some who were caught gambling. They were tall, slender, sloppy, fat, some with bad faces, and a few had handsome ones.

They approached my bunk, menacingly.

One of them grabbed my blanket and yanked it off. Suddenly, they were all talking at one time, their voices mounting in excitement, and ugliness, about what they were going to do, what they wanted to do, with me.

"Where are we going with him?"

"What are we going to do with him?"

"We're taking him to the boiler room."

"Man, I ain't had it for four months, and I'm getting it, tonight!"

"Man, like we're *all* getting it, tonight!" another laughed, evilly. I broke into a cold sweat.

In a quick, hard pull, one of them hauled me out of bed. I was lifted up and carried past the latrine, outside the barracks, and into the boiler room, in back. Some of the men were running ahead, opening the doors as we went. One of them had been stationed as the lookout.

"Hurry up, get him *in* here!"

One of them had his rough hand tight over my mouth.

It was useless to struggle, but I did. I arched and pulled and squirmed wildly but it didn't matter. There were too many of them and I wasn't prepared to cope with animal violence. I had never anticipated anything like this happening to me.

I was terrified.

They were all around me. One of them reached across all the hands and arms and ripped off my shorts, tossing them out and away from the meddle of bodies. I didn't know what they were going to do.

"Hey, look at this! I have a good one all ready for you, Baby."

"No! Let me go first!"

"Man, have I got the hots."

They shoved me up against the wall. I shuddered, violently.

"Hey, for Crissakes, get the hell over to the door and watch the goddammed thing, will ya!" one of them commanded to another.

"Get down on your knees, you little bastard!"

Before I could move I was shoved cruelly down on my knees, to the concrete. It grated against my skin. It was cold, even in the boiler room, with the furnace roaring, several feet away.

One of them forced himself into my mouth.

I gagged.

There was a small amount of light coming in from the cracks around the room. They were watching each other as I was forced to do their bidding.

One of them demanded the guy in front of me hurry up, because he was going to rape me.

"Hurry up, man. I want to stick this in him!"

"This is what you like, huh, you miserable shit. We've got plenty of it for you. You ain't gonna need any when you get finished with mine. You ain't gonna need any for a long time, Baby."

One of them got so excited, watching the others, he masturbated all over my shoulder. This made him angry and he stepped

forward and slapped my face, hard, again and again. It burned in pain.

"Brother, if you say anything about this, tomorrow, we'll get you. We'll beat you to a bloody *pulp*. After tonight, when we want it, you come running, *do you hear?! You're going to be our property. We'll protect you. Nobody's going to touch you but us.*"

They kept at me for over two hours. Everything in the world was done to me.

They laughed, and spit on me. Some held me down and took me. Others held my legs apart, up in the air, while one or another used me.

They walked out the door, finally, chattering lewdly, and laughing, exhausted, and smug with themselves.

I was laying on the floor, half-propped against the wall, completely numb.

My mind couldn't function. I tried to think.

"What? Oh, God . . . God help me. Get me out of here. Oh, please, *help me.*"

I lay there a long time, unmoving.

I was bleeding. My face ached. My hair hurt from being pulled and yanked as first one and then another shoved me around, viciously. If I could have jumped over the walls without being shot, I would have.

Later, I crawled across the floor and found the rags of my shorts.

Dumbly, I held a piece of it in front of me and made my way for the door. I got into the barracks and went into the latrine.

There was a face in the mirror. I stared at it, without feeling. My mind wasn't responding. Mechanically, I washed myself, watching the blood flow down the drain.

I walked back towards my bunk. It was nearly dawn. There was only the sound of all the men sleeping, some noisy, some snoring, some blissfully quiet. The sound of them sickened me.

I sat on the edge of my bunk and sobbed.

In fifteen minutes reveille sounded. The night had ended.

That morning I *insisted* on seeing the psychiatrist. He advised the Service to discharge me after I told him of my life in the Compound. It seems I was a danger to the *men* in the stockade.

I asked if I would ever be drafted again.

"Not until they've taken all the women and children!" he said.

A week later, I was mustered out. I had been in the Service for almost two years. At first I had *really tried*. I had every intention of carrying it through. It was hard for me to feel I was the sole cause for failure. And, *I still hadn't fired a rifle!*

Camp Meeting Time

I NEVER WANTED TO SEE that uniform again—on *me!*

On anybody else it held a certain kind of appeal to me, in addition to admiring a serviceman's answer to duty. To me it meant scarred memories.

I went to San Diego.

My parents owned a restaurant on Point Loma, across the street from the San Diego Navy Base. When I was settled I got a job in the beauty salon at Walker's, San Diego's largest department store.

I was living with my family again, and peeling potatoes each morning before leaving for the Salon, to help out mother in the restaurant.

But things weren't right. I couldn't settle down. I was restless. My whole thinking process changed to total mental depression. My life in a small town had been a failure. The years in the Army were a failure. Drag shows seemed to have run their course with me. I decided that everything about my life could be boiled down to two simple words: *complete failure*.

The Army psychiatrist had convinced me I was "different" from anyone else in the world. I began to feel I didn't fit anywhere. I just didn't belong. I was a misfit in the cycle of Life. Nobody *really* wanted me.

What good was I?

Everything became monotonous. Cruising sailors became monotonous, too. I had a different one in bed every night and in the morning we'd have breakfast with my parents before he left to return to the Base.

"Kenny certainly makes new friends *fast*," Mother said to her friends.

There was such a sameness to it all. Sex became one big *bore*. I couldn't seem to find a place for myself.

Grandmother, who was visiting, kept repeating I should get married and *settle down*. "Your trouble is, you're just too *restless!*"

Older people forget they were young once. They criticize actions they did earlier. Time erases many things and they've forgotten the foolish didoes of their youth.

One Saturday evening I was on my way to a movie and passed a group of young college-age people, some of them in Service uniform. It reminded me of Pershing Square. I stopped and listened.

They were singing, "Shall We Gather At the River." After they finished, a young sailor, with a small testament in his hand, stood before the gathered crowd and told how Jesus had *saved* him from a life of sin.

". . . I gave my life completely to the Service of the King. I'll go anywhere *He* leads me. Whether it be the darkest parts of Africa, or here, right *here* in the sin-filled streets of San Diego. I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, than be a sinner, deep in sin, and never *know* where I was going to spend Eternity. Reach out your hand and put it in the nail-pierced hand of the Master! And He'll give you riches untold!"

With this the trombone player, the trumpeter, and the bass drummer began to play, "Leaning On the Everlasting Arms." And as they played, some of the others sang. To this background, the young sailor spoke on, *above* the din.

"Dear souls! Here and *now*, lean on Jesus. If your heart is heavy and your burdens more than you can bear—friends have forsaken you . . . turn, TURN to *HIM*. *He'll* help! He'll lift your burdens. He'll heal your body. He'll cleanse your life from Sin. He will give you a *new* life. A new name! Friends, is *your* name written there? In the Book of Life? Raise your hands right *now*. Raise them! Raise them while your heads are *bowed*. Oh, thank you. Thank you, brother. I *see* your hand, over there.

We'll *pray* for you. Who else?! Let's *see* the hands. *This* isn't just for *now*! *This* is for *Eternity*!!"

I didn't raise my hand. I raised an *eyebrow*, and smiled. He smiled back.

"Now, while the brothers and sisters are singing the last verse, search your hearts, and listen to these words. "What a *friend* we have in Jesus . . . all our sins and griefs to bear . . . what a privilege to carry . . . everything to God, in pray!"

They started to sing the chorus. He came over and put his arm around my shoulders. He gave me a *brotherly* hug and asked, "Brother, do you *need* our prayers?"

I said, "Yes."

I remembered the genuine happiness of my earlier years of church participation.

I went to Church with them that night and I was *saved*, again. At the Altar Call I rose and walked forward. If He would erase all of my past, I would *really* be able to begin anew. I felt this *must* be what I longed for. What I was searching for. The tears of repentance streamed down my face.

I prayed until I suddenly felt my past was gone—it was *forgiven*. As I turned to leave, I was no longer alone. Everyone was so happy the backslider had come *home*.

I had joined them. Now I could lead a good, clean life. The congregation didn't ask about my past life of sin. I was a new, washed-clean person. I *felt* clean, mentally and physically. I was suddenly so happy.

My days seemed cheerful. The sun seemed to shine more brightly. Living things all around me seemed more beautiful. *Life* seemed more beautiful.

Sex, that had reached the boring point, was a thing of the past. I was going to forget about it. *Ignore* it!

I went to church every time I got a chance. I never missed a Service. I went to prayer meetings, young people's meetings, church picnics, song-fests, and "gatherings for Christ."

Occasionally, my mind would have to fight off the sex urge. It was strong, I realized. It kept coming back. I had to *conquer* it. But how?

Even though I kept blotting thoughts out, I was mentally convincing myself I was no longer a sinner. I sincerely believed my life was in the Hands of Jesus. I didn't really listen to the sermons, asking us to reach out to Jesus because had I—I would have had help.

Every week, at Altar Call, I went forward and knelt in prayer. I asked what I could do to change my life of temptation and sin. I felt I had to work in the church, completely, in order to be *free* of temptation.

But I knew so *many* sinners in all parts of the country. No matter where I would go I would run into them—face temptation, head on. And perhaps *fall!* I *couldn't* let *that* happen, again.

The answer seemed to be the Missionary field. I would go to *deepest* Africa and save souls for *Him*. No temptation could change me *there*. No one *knew* me, there!

I would be completely free . . . to do His work. It was my answer. He gave it to me at the Altar Call. I was convinced of that. I was saved, and I was *free*.

I told the minister I wanted to *really* give my life for Christ. "I want to go to Africa, for Him!"

Within six months I had letters of reference from two "saints," the minister's letter of recommendation, and my filled-in school application. I was accepted. School would start with the Fall Term, three months later, and I was *ready*.

I gave away my loud, sporty, gay clothing, and sent my drags to grandmother, thinking she could make some patchwork quilts. I bought a variety of black suits, black socks and shoes, hat, brief case, and even a black umbrella. I looked like what the well-dressed young Brooks Brothers Missionary Servant would wear to Africa. And off I went to school.

It was September, and all my thoughts on the train trip were visions of my converting the heathens in *deepest* Africa. I didn't *need* a mask of masculinity. My power and strength was to come from getting *more* religion, from work, and faith.

Everyone at the Institute was my new, and close friend. I was soon known as "Brother Kenny."

The first afternoon occasioned the Reception Tea for new

students. It was an afternoon affair, so it was tea and cookies. If it had been an early evening affair it would be coffee and cookies. After song-fests it was punch and cookies. Later evening affairs were milk and cookies. It was easy to be chairman of the Refreshment Committee . . . all you had to do was know the *time of day*, which indicated the proper *beverage*, then serve cookies.

I studied social, normal, abnormal, and child psychology, Angelology, and story-telling. In story-telling we told a progressive story through the whole semester. One day we started with a story for a two year old, next day for a four year old and so on through adult stories.

I selected Little Black Sambo as my assignment. The desk was to be the big, *big* tree. I took off my black shoes and black coat, just like at the beginning of one of my strips, and ran around and around the desk as I related Sambo's adventure until *everything* turned to butter. I got an "A", but then I had told a few stories before Bible School.

And I was also doing quite well in song leading.

There was to be a speech memorization contest. Each speech was two and a half pages long and dealt with the *evils* of liquor. There were various awards.

Silver Shield winners went on to become Gold Shield Winners. Then to the Diamond Pin, and finally, the Opal Pin.

I did a brilliant, if somewhat dramatic, job through the Gold Shield Honor. Some of the students from *real* Christian homes, who'd never *seen* a drunken person in their lives, were giving competitive speeches, against *ME* . . . Old Becky, the B-drink Queen of Calumet City! The whole program series was sponsored by the State Division of the WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION.

I started a Wednesday afternoon Children's Hour for the children of the faculty and students. I began with six and soon had 58 bright, young faces with which to work. I was soon to become "Uncle Kenny."

Most of my material I borrowed from Art Linkletter, Tom Hatton, and Captain Kangaroo. I got white sailor pants, a white

T shirt, and white shoes, and I had my roommate and other friends help me build a boat in which to sit and tell my stories.

All the *good* little boys and girls could sit *in* the boat, with *Uncle Kenny*. By the time many weeks were past it was floundering dangerously, from overweight.

I'd ask them which animal they would like to be if they were an animal. Most of them wanted to be a lion. The "roar" was a much better sound then if you wanted to be a butterfly, for instance.

We also did "illustrated" action songs like "Climb, Climb Up Sunshine Mountain", and "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine!"

After the Story Hour, we *always* went outdoors to play Drop the Handkerchief. I provided the chiffon handkerchief.

I also became known to the student body as Uncle Kenny. Students realized I was "worldly." With my sense of humor I was known as the Campus Cut-up. Some had never been to a movie or a dance. I told them the plots of every movie I could think of from "Birth of a Nation" to "The Moon is Blue". And I gave dance exhibitions to show the *evils* of the Charleston, and Jitterbug steps. All in the privacy of my room, *naturally*. And I gave lessons in poker and *cleaned up* enough dirty stories to be able to tell them a well-rinsed version of each.

How else, I figured, were they going to be able to fight the "sins" they knew nothing *about*?

In my spare time, I set up a beauty shop, in the basement of the Girls' Dormitory, under the supervision of Sister Naomi, Dean of Women.

My roommate, Jerry, and I shared dormitory quarters for almost two years. He was captain of the school's football squad. One day he pushed my face toward his privates. He told me, afterwards, he had to *prove* to himself his *suspensions* of my homosexuality were true. It was the ruination of my religious progression. My mental images fell apart.

I was certain, the next day, as I went through my classes every individual in the school could see my scarlet letter.

I tried praying. I tried reading the Bible.
Nothing helped.

Up to now I had submerged myself into total school activity. I was Hall Counselor in the Men's Dormitory, Group Leader of the African Prayer Band, Business Manager of the campus radio station, Class Vice President, originated Uncle Kenny's Children's Hour, assisted at Sunday afternoon jail services, and was the assistant leader of Volunteers for the County Poor Farm.

I had been so involved I was too occupied to *think* of the past, my past. There's nothing so religious as a reformed drunk, or prostitute, who's "got religion".

In addition to the personal, emotional upheaval caused by Jerry, I found that there were other hanky-panky goings-on.

Several male students had left campus because of homosexual involvement, a pregnant student committed suicide, another forced her partner into marriage just before the birth of their child. I avoided any association with some obviously gay students who came to me for counsel like the school organist, who stated that he only managed to get satisfaction through oral gratification with female students.

I spent the following three days in my room, soul-searching.

I attended none of my classes. Then Dean Metzger asked me to come to his office. I was sure Jerry had told him everything.

"Brother Kenneth. . . ."

"Yes, Dean Metzger. . . ."

"Your load is too *heavy*, my boy. You are taking nineteen hours which is too much in the first place. You're involved in so many school activities you haven't time to *think* properly. I've seen students who've had nervous breakdowns from such an overload. However, I have found that students most often overwork themselves for a *reason*. You don't *have* to be in the ministry to expiate your past. Tell me, son, do you really *believe* that Christ died for all your sins?"

I was going to reply but he interrupted, adding, "Pray on this. *Think* about it. We'll talk about it tomorrow morning. You just *think* about it."

In the morning, I returned to his office. I knew the answer he

wanted. He repeated the question.

I replied, "Yes, I *do* believe He paid for them."

"Well, it would seem, the way you are going about your life, *you* are trying to pay for them. You don't have to be in the Ministry, to be *forgiven* your sins."

I said I had been the worst sinner possible and *had* to give my life for the best *possible* cause.

He said, "If you *really* believe He died for our sins, you don't *have* to save yourself by giving up your own life. *He* already did that *for* you, son."

I had suddenly become embittered by school and some of the students, I knew that. I had "back-slid". And some of them had lost the glow of purity with which my mind had surrounded them. I had lost a gift I tried to *force* onto myself. I felt so helpless.

I returned to the dormitory. Everything seemed so utterly bleak.

I didn't realize then that no experience of life is really wasted. I knew everything had a reason and a purpose. My sincerity in *trying* had been honest.

I packed my things, called Railway Express to ship them, and walked out the gate. I said goodbye to no one.

I didn't feel like crying, nor shouting, nor accusing. I didn't feel anything. I was *numb*.

Never a Bride

I RETURNED to Los Angeles, worked at the May Company's Beauty Salon for awhile, moved to the Broadway Department Store, then tried J. C. Penney's Beauty Salon for a couple of days. None of the shops were up to my expectations.

My associations were mostly with straight people I knew, and employees from shops where I worked. My heterosexual friends wanted to know more about the drag shows I'd worked in over the years. Most of them had never seen one.

After some pleading and cajoling, I agreed to do a show in my apartment on Ninth Street.

I charged a dollar for admission and mother and my aunts operated the bar-and-buffet from the kitchen. The charge was to defray the cost of throwing a quick wardrobe together for the show.

I was the star of the show, the featured attraction, the singer, the dancer and the stripper. It went over with only a slight loss. I had *no* competition. The Christmas tree spotlights became footlights.

One aunt sat at the door under the sign: "ADMISSION—One Dollar", and mother sat at a table by the kitchen door, next to the sign: "DRINKS \$1—SANDWICHES 50¢." Another sign in the living room read: "KENNY MARLOWE—Drag Impersonations."

From the bedroom, I announced myself through the microphone of the record player, put a record on in the hallway, and came on to do a number. When I'd finished a number, I pranced back through the hallway, kicked off the player, hurriedly

changed costumes, put on a new record, and waltzed back into the "stage area."

It was a two hour show, and I'd just finished changing into slacks and a sport shirt when the doorbell rang.

Two police officers said they had various complaints from the neighborhood that we were disturbing the peace.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Officer," I said in my most repentant voice, "but it just ended and everyone's *leaving*."

"All right," he said, and that seemed to be that. The thirty guests left.

I wasn't getting rich quick working in department stores. While waiting for my big moment to arrive, I went for a drink, one evening, at a Melrose Avenue bar and met a very nice looking gentleman who was also a hairdresser. He worked in the posh Salon at I. Magnin's in Beverly Hills.

We went to my apartment to compare notes. He told me, in a few words, most of them down-his-nose, that I should step *up*.

In *his* place, "the hairdressers work in suits, there are *never* any bargain sales, and the prices and gratuities are so much better than anywhere *else*." I was so enthused by our conversation I went to I. Magnin's to apply for a position on my next day off.

Again it was an audition but I was hired.

However, they didn't have an opening at Beverly Hills but had one at I. Magnin's in Oakland, California.

The guarantee and commissions were so good I said, "Yes!", and gave notice at the shop immediately. A little over a week later, I was working for Charles of the Ritz, I. Magnin's.

I checked into the Oakland Y. It was the *deadest* Y I'd ever moved into, and I wasn't thrilled with the prospects. After a couple of days, Rita, the receptionist at Charles of the Ritz, took me apartment hunting.

We located a nice little apartment in a building on Kaiser Lake. I was glad to get out of the Oakland Y because it was complete Dullsville. Rita had ulterior motives. She showered me with dishes, pots, pans, scatter rugs and toss pillows . . . lots of things to make the place homey. She was a buxom, married woman with

a marvelous figure, and a healthy sex appetite. Her husband, Fred, owned a business only two blocks from my apartment, and Sam, her more-or-less steady boyfriend, owned a finance company, also in the immediate vicinity.

There were others, but Sam was the most frequent visitor. They'd come over, sometimes at odd hours, and I would have to shift into the living room for a while, go for a drink, a walk, or just *out*. I began to feel that something was going on in my apartment that I didn't like. Mostly because *I* was spending more time out of the place than *in*.

Then one night I got back to the apartment about midnight, after a visit to my parents in Los Angeles, when Sam knocked on the door.

"Rita isn't here," I said.

"I didn't come to see Rita. I came to see you, baby," Sam said.

"You've come to visit *me*?"

"Come in," I said as I opened the door wider. He stayed all night.

I'd also made friends with one of the boys at work, George, who lived at home with his parents, but also shared an apartment with his *friend*. The three of us had Sunday dinners together, dressed in high drag.

It was one of the few mad scenes that ever went on in Oakland. We looked forward to Sundays and the dinners helped me forget about the Rita problem. The dinners were lots of laughs and I needed something to alleviate my worries about Rita. She and her friends were always around my apartment and I was sure Fred was lurking around every corner and would come rushing in, one day, to kill us, blaming me as the party responsible for her affairs.

My insurance didn't cover homicide so I decided it was time to get out of Oakland. I moved across the Bay to San Francisco.

I had visited the baths in San Francisco and many of my hours were spent in the baths, after work, from time to time. I would spend all day Saturday and on into Sunday afternoon in them. It was exhausting, but it was fun.

Occasionally, I went to a church in Oakland, and found my former History instructor from the Bible Institute was pastor. I then went every Sunday.

I became friendly with Barbara, a girl I'd known briefly at the Bible Institute. She had moved West and was living in the parsonage. She was a friendly, midwestern girl who had a pleasant Christian upbringing, if somewhat sheltered.

Barbara was several years younger than I, five foot two, wore a size five dress, and had warm brown coloured hair that hung halfway down her back. She always wore her hair tight up over her ears and let it hang down.

She worked as the church secretary, and we began going to weddings, concerts, and social functions together. She was pleasant to be with and everyone from the church said we made "such a lovely couple."

Typical of ordinary gay life, I had become a real hypocrite. I was with Barbara on Sundays and Thursdays, and still devoted my five other nights to *men*.

I never had to worry about being discovered in bars because none of the church members drank or went to movies. I was "safe" nearly anywhere as long as I was discreet. *Sometimes* I was so discreet I remembered that someone might be passing along the street outside, and I would leave establishments by the rear doors.

The congregation had a large group of deaf mutes and Barbara interpreted Sunday sermons (in sign language) for them. They sat in the front section of church and she stood facing them and translated the vocal sermons into hand-sign manipulations. There were about sixty mutes in the group.

I often helped because I too had studied this phase of church work at the Bible Institute.

In fact, one evening I met a deaf mute in a gay bar and after a long "finger" conversation, we shared my bed for the night. For which we didn't *need* a language.

He'd lost his hearing during the war. I was certainly glad I had learned a little bit about everything.

One of my customers at Charles of the Ritz was also a deaf

mute. She was happy to *discover* me because she was tired of writing notes to get her hair done the way she wanted it. We "chatted" with flying hands all the while I did her hair and were able to tell one another dirty stories in "convenient" sign language.

My relationship with Barbara became more frequent. Many girls are automatically attracted to homosexual men because they are at ease with them, they can talk easily with them, and are never worried about being raped. Heterosexual men are always trying to prove to themselves they are masculine. Mostly through vulgar language, hard drinking, and animal-like female seduction.

My family prodding about marriage made me think this relationship would solve a lot of problems. The world, through marriage, would consider me "normal". It began to seem like an attractive prospect.

Through our companionship, I was good for Barbara, too, in my own way. I brought her out of her shell and re-made her. She was a kind of Liza Doolittle and I enjoyed the compliments of our friends. She became a totally new person and she no longer wore cotton gingham.

One Sunday I had her decked out in a white picture hat with chiffon swirls and a side, white cabbage rose, a royal blue long-sleeved turtle-necked wool jersey dress, covered by a white, three-quarter length sleeveless coat, wristlet white gloves and a long, envelope purse with high heeled pumps instead of her customary loafers. Parishioners could hardly believe their eyes, and I was proud of her.

The change was evident in her, too. She became more confident in herself, even though she insisted I accompany her when she shopped, and asked if I *liked* each item she bought.

Our church relationship had *pushed* us together and I didn't avoid it. When we double-dated, there were occasional scenes when it was embarrassing because we didn't "neck", but I mentioned to Barbara that I didn't like to do things like that, "in public."



KENNETH MARLOWE ON STAGE
My-O-My, New Orleans, Beige Room, San Francisco
and the Holiday Inn in Calumet City, Illinois.



KENNETH MARLOWE as an author on vacation from
“girly” shows and “pedicures”.



KENNETH MARLOWE IMPERSONATES MADAM BELLE LIVINGSTON.



THE HAIR STYLIST AT WORK—this time back stage, before an opening night at Los Angeles' Huntington Hartford Theatre on Vine Street.



KENNETH MARLOWE
IMPERSONATES MADAM BEVERLY DAVIS.



KENNETH MARLOWE
GIVES HIS IMPRESSION OF MAE WEST.



KENNETH MARLOWE
IMPERSONATES MADAM SALLY STANDFORD.



MR. MADAM AT LEISURE.

Finally, I gave her a diamond ring. And one of my mink stoles. Since we were nearly the same size it wasn't a bad fit.

During my "improvement" of Barbara I began to give lectures on Hair and Fashions.

This was in connection with fashion shows sponsored by various women's clubs and civic groups. The first one was for 1800 women at the Berkeley County Club. It turned out well and I began organizing Fashion shows for various groups.

After that I started working one evening a week, lecturing students at a charm school on make-up and hair care. I found I didn't have to be in drag to be the center of attention.

Between lectures and Barbara's "improvement" I was involved with women more directly than I had ever been, as an adult. Barbara was now literally throwing herself at me.

Two weeks before our marriage the minister bluntly asked me, "Does Barbara *know* you're a homosexual?"

His question infuriated me.

It upset and distressed me. I was particularly disturbed that he had the nerve to question me as we'd had no other conversation about it. I felt sure I *must* have been the topic of conversation at the dinnertable and I didn't appreciate that.

I called Barbara, who came to my apartment, and we talked it over. I told her about my preferences. Barbara said she *understood* about such things but still wanted to marry me.

She asked if I was still a virgin.

"With women—yes!"

And I was.

I never actually had a normal sex act with any of the girls in New Orleans. Or any woman. So, I *was* a virgin.

"Well, how do you know you wouldn't like it?" Barbara asked.

She wanted to help me *overcome* my problem. I should give up hairdressing. That would *help change* me. I should find a job people considered more *masculine*.

I should work at something *manly*! I'd heard this kind of *simple* cure before. I felt I was far more of an authority on the subject than she.

Barbara was willing to test things that night, right then. I didn't agree.

I said, "You're a nice girl and you stay that way. I've messed up my own life and I'm not going to mess up yours. You get yourself a real, masculine man and marry him!"

I knew plenty of queens who'd tried marriage by heterosexual standards, and messed up many lives as a result. I wasn't willing to cause more unhappiness besides my own.

I would not have, under any circumstances, forced an unwanted soul into a physical body, creating an unwanted child on my part. I knew Barbara hoped to have children and lead a happy, normal life but I could not enter into a union which would only result in her further unhappiness. It is a horrible truth that this is being done every year by thousands of people who are proud of their "normal" sex relations. Yet, knowingly or unknowingly they create more unhappiness in the world.

"There'll *never* be anyone but *you!*", she declared through her tears. I appreciated that but I knew she would soon forget me if she could have a normal relationship with a "normal" man. It was what I *wanted* for her.

We went for a walk around the Lake and continued our talk. But towards the end we could think of nothing to say to each other. She gave back my diamond.

We parted.

I never saw Barbara again.

It had been quite an experience.

To *hell* with the people in the world who "think" I am homosexual, I decided right then and there. If this is what they expect of me, *here I am!* I never again *pretended* to be what I am not.

I decided to return to drag.

It was my way of "getting even" with all those people in my life who'd *suspected* I was a homosexual.

It took two months to collect my wardrobe and music to be able to give my audition at Finocchio's.

Meanwhile, I worked in a beauty salon called the Wash 'n Twirl owned by two of the dizziest men who ever mated. They'd

been together eighteen years and fought constantly. And camped all over the place.

This was the beginning of finding myself because I decided I had to now "go the route".

I sold everything I could of my clothing and household goods to raise money for the new drags. But Hallowe'en Eve I got intoxicated in the salon. Harry decided to dye my hair "Hollywood starlet" carrot-red.

I put on some clothing borrowed from Liz, the "clean-up" girl, and went out for the night. I picked up a man in a bar, someplace, and went home with him. It was a horrible shock when I awoke in the morning and looked in the mirror. Needing a shave, with only my female clothing, I had to go home, five blocks away, on foot.

Harry dyed my hair back to its natural colour that morning, as I didn't want to live my existence in complete drag.

Harry and his *friend* operated the salon as the spirit moved them. If they decided to paint one of the walls in the middle of a permanent wave they did.

Or they'd send out for beer and sandwiches and throw a party in the middle of a work afternoon.

Liz, the "cleaning lady", was *another* thing. She lived up the street a block and came around daily to "discuss" things. Mostly her hustling problems.

Her age was against her. She was short, with bleached-blond hair, a fat 45-45-45 figure and the skinniest legs I'd ever seen on a woman. She was pallid and her several teeth were haphazardly arranged in her wide mouth. Liz had the looks to which men often referred in relation to "using the flag" during intercourse. But she had a heart of gold!

Liz always *expected* ten dollars to turn a trick but was lucky to snag two or three bucks at a time. And she complained to us after each one about how they'd "cheated" her.

At the Wash 'n Twirl, the boys gave her a dollar each day and she kept the place "clean". Her cleaning methods were not to be believed.

I thought the real reason they put up with her was because she had a stock phrase when kidded about her sex life. "Oh, let me tell you, brother . . . I get *plenty* of repeats and compliments. I'll have you know *most* of my trade is repeats and compliments!" she stated firmly, hands squarely on her hips.

She was our laugh for the day.

The evening finally arrived for my audition at Finocchio's. I had always dreamed of opening at the top drag showcase in the country. Mother and some friends and relatives came up from Los Angeles for Opening Night. The house was packed and in a good mood.

For my first number I wore a jeweled white leotard, completely covered by a huge white coat that was "busy" enough to cause gasps from the audience. It was made with 168 yards of white netting, in tiered layer over layer, and so bouffant the base covered several yards of the floor. The cape-sleeves were designed in the same style. I carried a single, *long-stemmed* red rose.

That afternoon I'd "ordered" the rose at the nearby florist's and with each one he brought out, I'd say, "Longer stem!"

Where he finally found the one I used, only God will know.

"Rose of Washington Square" was the song I sang in a throaty, husky version of my former choir voice. After a dozen years of knocking around, *it* had traveled South quite a few keys.

The master of ceremonies, known as the paper-fashion plate, gave me a marvelous introduction. All of his wardrobe was fashioned from Dennison's crepe paper. He was very proud of his extensive paper drags.

At the finale of the song, I deftly spread my arms and stepped forward, leaving the coat behind. It stood by itself. And I stood in the few inches of white *peau de soie*, discreetly covered with multiple strands of glittering rhinestones. The figure hadn't changed!

There were a number of other acts before I came out to do the second show. For this I wore a simple chiffon cocktail dress and pumps, and carried four striped hat boxes.

Each box contained a hat symbolizing a different country, and I did a dance "routine" with each hat. There was a French can-

can hat, an American cloche for the Charleston, a Dutch white, lace cap, and a banded fluff of chiffon, with a huge golden earring dangling at one ear, as I jiggled a tambourine while the orchestra played, "Play Gypsy, Dance Gypsies."

After all my expense and effort I wasn't hired.

"We don't have an opening right now!" Mrs. Finocchio said. I learned a lesson. Never again would I go to the expense of a showbusiness "audition" on the *floor* to paying customers!

I went to Market Street to buy a Miami Beach newspaper. It had twenty five ads for beauty operators. That's where I headed.

I didn't consider working drag in Miami. I was going to answer one of those want ads.

Arriving in Miami, I went to check into the Y but it was full. I was furious! I checked into a Guest House before starting my search for a job.

I went to the Americana Hotel, and applied for the position in the ad. I didn't have to audition. They were terribly busy . . . it was in the middle of the "season" . . . and Vince and Alice said, "Can you start *immediately*?"

I thought it was wonderful. I would be able to begin right away in the morning.

"What time do you open?" I asked.

They looked at me.

"No, no . . . right *now*! Today!"

I went to work *immediately*.

As a luxury hotel-resort the place had a floor show with top stars and many famous, wealthy patrons. From time to time some of my customers were celebrated, important people. It was a fascinating place to work.

There was never much business in the morning because everyone who "stayed" at the Hotel was on the Beach. But through the afternoons and early evenings, it was *rush hour*. Most of the guests wanted to show how much money they had and were out to spend it impressively.

You could hustle them for any and *all* services the salon offered. They were glad to pay for "the works" because they didn't want to be out-done by other hotel guests.

The "girls" who came into the shop every day, during their "vacations", were in the sun all morning because they didn't want to go back, mostly to New York City, unless they looked like a *schwartz*.

They wore a kind of afternoon "uniform". The "girls" wore tight pants, terry-cloth shorties, high heels with flowers and decorated shoe clips, *multiple* dangling-bracelets, *huge* bags, always protruding a pair of knitting needles, a big, *big* hat, with plenty of flowers, and other jazzy decoration, *fancy* sunglasses, and bleached blonde hair, or frosted tips. Every one of them resembled an over-dressed Sadie Thompson on a slow night.

They came in, before the dinner show, in evening wear, for comb-outs.

"Darlink, I'm vonting you should comb me out gud tonight? Ve're dining vith my husband's boss. My son, he's a doctor. He's joining?"

In the evening it was another uniform . . . bugle-beaded dresses under white fox stoles, plastic heels with rhinestone clips, gloves up to the 32nd button, and rhinestone tiaras. The whole picture always reminded me of the better-dressed drag queens.

The "uniform" for evening was completed by *teased* hair-dos. The hair-dos had to be at *least* a foot off the skull! God forbids they'd look like a *schicktze*!

When I would finish with a customer, I stood well back from the mirror, lifted my hands to the top of my shoulders in a shrug-stance of supplication, wrinkled my brow and said, "*Shana maidel!*?"

The size of the returned smile usually indicated the size of the tip. Which also depended on who her competition at the dinner-table that night was going to be.

I rented a room from the manicurist whom I called "Aunt May." She worked the Americana Salon for a half dozen seasons and knew *everybody*.

For amusement I went to the Biscayne, and Flagler Dog tracks. I found the thrill of the dog races was nearly as intoxicating as sex. It became a new diversion. There wasn't much time to cruise or think of who was out and around the track—the races were

what I began to live for. And it wasn't the races that bugged me but the damned waiting, *in between races!*

Passover came.

I learned that after April 15th the season fell flat on its face. Business moved to the Catskills in New York.

Aunt May said she always went to the Jersey Shore for the summer, at the Essex and Sussex Hotel in Spring Lake, New Jersey.

I went along.

But I didn't like the resort or the clientele. It was the zenith of snobbery I'd yet encountered. The Hotel was ancient and respectable. It was an old frame building with four hundred rooms and a veranda that went all the way around the exterior.

Guests would select their rocking chairs when they arrived and that was pretty much where they spent the afternoons of their ten week summer stay.

My main objection was the policy of segregation which was obvious in the worst way. Even Elizabeth Taylor Fisher was refused a reservation that summer, according to staff gossip.

My job application was carefully scrutinized for my religious background-affiliation. I thought, *we* Christians, sticking together again!

We lived nearby in the little town of Bradley Beach which was kind of campy, especially the Boardwalk, with its johns every half block.

I found a small Y. And my weekends were soon spent at the Asbury Park Y where the rooms were usually busy all weekend.

At the Essex and Sussex Salon the Hotel guests were signed up with the same operator for the length of their season's stay. It was all so stuffy and routine you were afraid to break wind.

One ex-wife of a department store chain heir would borrow five dollars from me several times a week. This was her "spending money" to go to the Monmouth Hotel, or Sullivan's Lodge, nearby. She'd sign for a "shampoo and set" which her father, who'd cut off ready cash, would pay, and I would give her the "shampoo and set" *money*.

I wasn't happy there. Aunt May and I talked it over one eve-

ning in the cottage at Bradley Beach and I decided to go to the mountains, to work the rest of the season at the Catskills.

She suggested the Concord Hotel because she knew one of the manicurists there. Aunt May called her.

"Oh, we need all the help we can get, anytime. We can't *keep* 'em," she told May.

I hurried up North.

It was four hours out of New York City by bus. This summer resort was off by itself, nearly fifteen miles from Monticello, the nearest community. I lived in a small hotel in Monticello where the only amusements were the Monticello Raceway and the small motion picture theatre.

There were a number of lodges which had social directors to organize activities but most of the time we sat playing cards in small groups, grateful just to be away from the Concord for the evening.

We were picked up, and brought back from the Hotel each day, by the Concord's own busses. All of the Hotel's help lived in Monticello.

The Concord Hotel housed 3000 people, had two golf courses, two *huge* swimming pools, an ice rink, three bars, two night-clubs, a shopping center, and the beauty salon—where I worked.

It was one room, oblong, perhaps thirty by sixty feet. There were fourteen operators working, and they worked harder than any production-line Henry Ford ever thought up.

The State Board people were always coming around and arguing about conditions with the management.

Everyone had a specific job to do. The shampoo girls did nothing but wash hair and the operators did the rolling, pinning up and comb-outs.

Five of the operators were related to the boss. But there wasn't time to get acquainted or pass pleasantries. You *worked* there and *did you work!*

The owner, a short, matronly Jewish woman named Sadie, with a husky voice, always wore the same striped dress every day, and we were open seven days a week for the entire season. She had a frosted Dutch-boy haircut, *never* wore the slightest

trace of make-up and was really something. She always wore molded, purple space shoes.

She was the crudest woman I'd ever met. She was a business-woman.

The operators averaged thirty heads a day and Sadie was the catalyst. The place was booked solid, all day long.

The women came in, slip in hand, and Sadie directed traffic. The slip was numbered and indicated where the customer was at any given hour, in the chain of processes of having her hair done at the Concord salon.

"Dollink, right dis vay. A sveetheart I'm giving you? As a hairdresser he's vat's called tops! I shud lie to you, he's a *gud* hairdresser?"

According to Sadie *every* operator was a *good* hairdresser. What she really meant was *fast*. You had to be fast . . . good and fast! She wasn't concerned with good, she just meant work as fast as you could to keep the line moving.

She didn't have to look, most of the time, at who she was indicating to the customer. It wasn't important. And it really didn't matter. She just waved a hand *toward* the direction of one of the hairdressers as she *sold* the customer. "Dollink, on my vord, he's the best?"

Sometimes customers would get to the comb-out, which was a lengthy process to have attained, and try to butter you up with an advance tip.

"Dollink, I'm vanting ya should make *me* like this! I have a picture? How I'm vanting it? Mine operator back home does it *dis* vay? I'm taking care of ya *now*, 'cause I'm knowing you're doink it *gud*?"

This, as she forced a loosely folded dollar bill into your palm.

But nothing escaped Sadie. *Nothing* got by Sadie! She didn't care about the *tip*, but she *did* care about the time it took while the explanation was being given.

"Dollink, convazation he ain't got time for? *Any* vay he sets it, it's *gud*? On *that* I'm staking my *life*? *Such* aggravation I shud go through!"

You, the operator, were a non-entity. The customers didn't

actually talk to *you*, they talked to Sadie. It was neither a written nor unwritten rule—it just happened because Sadie was the only one who could route them through the salon with any degree of speed. And *that* was a total impossibility.

"*How* long is it taking to comb me out?" one of them would demand. "Hyman will be so *mad*! Four hours he's waiting? So I'll kill myself!"

"So, *kill* yourself!" Sadie would answer. She didn't have time to think about it. There were too many others waiting in line.

Or, "Look at all da others waiting! Dey haven't been *set* yet?" Sadie would yell back.

"I shud pay \$50 a day to spend my vacation in dis salon?"

My station was next to the air-conditioning unit and it kept blowing on my neck. I told Sadie it was giving me a stiff neck.

"So, put a towel over it?"

I did.

But I still came down with a miserable cold. I was afraid it would spread to all the customers but she was only afraid I wouldn't be able to work for a few days.

"Whosatcha Hotel? Stay here vid us? Get vell here!" she said. "So, lean hup against the vall, if ya get tired? I von't vork ya too much, dollink?"

She cut me down to only twenty five heads! And, at the end of the day she said, "Don't go to da track! Go home and sleep tonight so ya von't be sick tomorrow?"

I think she felt all colds were of only a twenty four hour duration.

Besides being fast, and then good, you had to have stamina. Operators came and went. The worst of them lasted a day, and *rushed* back to New York City. The "tryer" lasted as long as two weeks. She was continually filling vacancies in the ranks with operators she was "trying out." They occasionally became winners. And the winners worked the entire season. *They* had *endurance*. They had *stamina*!

The major complaint of the customers was the *time* it took to have a complete shampoo and set. The average stay for a shampoo and set took five hours.

A customer came in and she always said, "You're next! Ve'll take ya right away!"

This meant a fifteen or twenty minute wait, to get to the shampoo girls. If a customer complained and said they'd come back in a half hour she intimidated them by saying, "I don't know if I can't take ya den. You're *here*, now. So, wait? You're da next von up!"

The shampoo took five minutes. They sat waiting for another half hour to forty five minutes with a towel wrapped around their heads. Then they got set. They waited again to get drier space.

Sometimes they were so dry from waiting for the set that we had to dampen them again. When they got to the drier, the shop had them under control. If we weren't ready for them Sadie could always go over, give their head a pat and say, "It's not *dry*, yet?"

By the time they got to the comb-out it had been so long since you set their hair, you couldn't remember which style they'd asked for. At one time I counted I had fourteen people under the dryers waiting for comb-outs. The customers had to have stamina too!

Most of the women were at the Hotel for either finding a husband for themselves, or to get husbands for their daughters, or granddaughters, or nieces. The conversations the women had between themselves dealt mostly with this subject.

The whole process of "Beauty" was to make sure the eligible girl in the case looked her *best*. Beauty consisted of what they wanted in a lavish hair-do, regardless of whether or not the latest style was a suitable frame for the girl's face.

I became acclimatized to the atmosphere and within a week I had an accent, complete with gestures, and the *mood* of the Salon.

If I found myself with a minute between customers I did as the other operators. I yelled across the room to Sadie, wherever she happened to be, and whatever she happened to be doing, "Sadie! votcha vant me to do, now? Vere's my next? I'm loosing money?!"

We wore anything to work from T shirts to fancy sport shirts. In other shops I wore uniforms or suits. But nobody cared here. *Your* appearance didn't matter. It was the finished product as she walked out and the volume per day that mattered. With *us*, it was only the physical *body* being there that counted. We worked six days a week, nine hours a day, week after week.

Every time the hair on the floor got too deep to walk through, from cuttings, we'd yell for Catherine, the colored maid, to bring the broom.

Sometimes there were as many as fifty people in the shop at one time. All the customers were smoking, all yakking, knitting sweaters, and waiting, waiting, waiting. It was the daylight hours social campground.

But it was Sadie's whole life. It was "*Such aggravation!*" If she had killed herself every time she said she was going to there would have been a line of bodies from here to Moscow.

The season ended with the High Holidays.

Toward the end of the season everything reached a real fever pitch. We were busy throughout the season but before the Holidays it was like a roar, just before the hurricane hit.

On the sixteenth of September the season ended for me.

I had a stroke.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Hi, There!

I WOKE UP with facial paralysis. My left eyelid wouldn't close and my mouth was drawn up into a painful grimace. I was exhausted.

I thought I'd slept on my face and it was drawn up because of that. I didn't think it was too serious until I tried to drink my morning coffee and found I had no control of my lips. It was impossible to control my drinking. I became frightened and called the doctor's office for an appointment.

He said I had Bell's Paralysis.

I called mother in Los Angeles. "Well, come home! At once," she said over the phone.

She and my stepfather had taken over management of an apartment-house, a large building off the Sunset Strip, just down the street from Schwab's drug-store.

There were twenty seven units in the building, with a pool in the central patio. The entire West Hollywood area had become a beautiful section of fine apartment buildings.

There was a small storage room on the second floor toward the rear. It had at one time been a laundry room and had a basin and stool at the corner of the L-shape. There was a window overlooking the rear court. It was small, six by thirteen feet, but having no vacancies, mother fixed up this room for me. She made it cosy with curtains and a daybed and for the next many months it would be my recovery room.

The doctor gave me daily therapy and electric facial shock treatments. I was to get a complete rest and forget about work for awhile, until my condition showed some improvement. The therapist came over, occasionally, to give me *private* treatment.

He was tall, young, blond and blue-eyed, from Switzerland, and he felt that the extra massage would help. Only on these private treatments he never got around to massaging my face, which was the part that *needed* it. The rest of me wasn't having any trouble.

Two young queens lived next door to my room. Bill was very masculine, well-built and with good features. He was an extra in movies and television, and Marty, his "roommate" who was effeminate, walked around on his toes and acted like Marilyn Monroe.

Marty said he was a dancer but never danced. He stayed home and did the cooking, cleaning, and "worrying". They argued periodically at the top of their lungs. It was easy to hear every word without effort.

They were the type who wouldn't think of putting on a dress and appearing in drag. They were very class conscious. Their furniture came from W & J Sloane's, Beverly Hills, and their clothes came from Bullocks, and Saks Fifth Avenue. They wouldn't have been caught dead in even a pair of socks from Sears!

They collected record albums and played them on the stereo—but sang along on only the women's parts.

One morning, about ten, I had just flushed the stool when there was a knock on the wall. I ignored it because I thought it was an accidental bump. It was repeated by another knock. This was followed by the rhythm signal. All but the final echo.

I answered it.

There was another knock, a moment later. This time it was at my door. I opened the door, and saw Bill standing in his open doorway. He then shut both doors as he came in, wearing a maroon robe.

When the doors were closed I found he was wearing only a pair of white shorts but not for long.

We set up a little code. If I was in the mood I would flush the stool twice and if he was then alone and available he would knock on the wall. This started a series of weekly visits for the next few months.

He wanted to try "new" things, things he had never done before, and some of which *I* had never done.

One morning he brought along a ping pong paddle and some rope. Another time we agreed beforehand to wear very *old* clothing. He *ripped* mine off before we started. It excited him.

And he always wore a thin gold chain with a medallion on it, a present from Marty. One day it annoyed him as it kept hitting against the back of my shoulders. In sharp irritation he grabbed at the chain and ripped it off. Marty's suspicion would cause fast repairment of the break, I knew.

Bill and Marty were both friendly enough, in public, when they wanted to be. If you were with someone they wanted to be introduced to they gave you a cheery "Hello!"

But more often than not they would pass you by for days and weeks at a time without a glance, much less a word. Then suddenly they spoke to you again. It got to be very confusing. Especially since Bill and I had such a close *relationship*, however *private*. It didn't bother me. I learned to ignore or hello them as the mood struck *them*.

My visits from him dwindled as Bill's commercial visits to the Chicago Athletic Club increased. Periodically he was gone for a week at a time and Marty waited at home alone. Eventually, Bill never knocked on the wall anymore.

Across the patio, a girl named Jane had an apartment. During my convalescence I occasionally combed her hair when she prepared to go out.

When I first arrived back in Los Angeles she was getting fifty dollars a trick, but her price went up. Sometimes her customers came and went pretty fast. She had a rapid turnover.

Jane was the Belle Livingston of the apartment building. She was the epitome of the girl with the heart of gold. She knew every line in the book including those few I never wrote, and she used all of them, one way or another, on her customers. When she finished with one, she had the cash in hand she wanted or he wasn't the kind who could afford her. And *nobody* came to Janie's who couldn't afford her.

One day she said, "This place is a goddamned *mess*. It needs re-doing. Here's some dough!"

She handed me \$125.00.

I came back in a little over an hour with paintings, scatter rugs, plants, and some toss pillows. I was at it again.

She liked the "new look" and began to get very social. She had friends and neighbors in for drinks and chats now, in addition to her clients.

One evening she had a catered dinner sent in and had me serve it, in a white jacket, to impress one of her expensive Johns. And Janie carried on the whole time as if she lived that way *all* the time.

Then she rented a silver-grey Thunderbird and had me chauffeur her back and forth to work. She worked two evenings a week, as a cocktail waitress at the Melody Room, a bar on the Sunset Strip, for income tax purposes. She wore little black leotards with opera hose and spikey heels, at work.

Once she had me drive her to the Sands Hotel on the Sunset Strip and wait while she turned two Mafia numbers. On the way home she discovered she'd forgotten one of her sandals. I couldn't imagine how she walked out of the hotel in only one sandal, and I refused when she asked me to return for it. I said, "No, dear, I've *had* it with Mafia!"

One of her guests was a jockey who got drunk on a couple of drinks. He dived into the pool from the second floor balcony railing and split his head open on the bottom of the pool. He is paralyzed for life.

Most of the people in the building were, in their own way, interesting and friendly people. It was the kind of atmosphere where you greeted people by first name, but never paid any attention to their comings and goings. In a small town you would have been very aware of what your neighbors were "doing" but in Hollywood, you never paid any attention.

The tenants were from every walk of life. From time to time many of them were unemployed. Some of them were seemingly *never* employed.

There were extras, actors, bartenders, writers, film cutters, models, stewardesses, a jeweler, a set decorator, bank clerks, secretaries, and the usual two or three faggots who had a different job every few weeks.

One of the film cutters lived with his mistress, who left for work every morning at 7:15. He usually got up at noon and went to Griffith Park, to sunbathe. The other film cutter was a loner, and an alcoholic. One rarely saw him, but he lived in the building for many years.

Lila, a television production secretary, had come to the United States from Austria as an interpreter for the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Circus and spoke five languages. She was vivacious and charming. Lila studied drama in Europe and left for Tucson on a location for her first film. It was tremendously successful.

Lila always wore bikinis, long before they were generally acceptable in America. She sat in the sun fifty-two weeks out of the year. One day she was sitting in the Patio for a few moments when she suddenly let out a blood-curdling scream. She flew up the stairs to her apartment. She'd *forgotten* the top.

When she returned, she went to an English couple sitting there and demanded to know why they hadn't *told* her. The woman said, "Well, we're from Europe and we didn't know *what* people did in Hollywood!"

Directly below her lived a writer who was married to a Japanese girl who worked in a Japanese restaurant on the Strip. She left for work each afternoon in complete native costume while he sat in the sun and read classic novels. He drove a Mercedes-Benz and made an annual six month trip to Japan for business purposes. He owned a large group of modern apartment houses there. But his wife stayed at the apartment and continued to work at the restaurant.

Another writer was a bearded newspaper columnist. He always did his writing after midnight and slept during the day. When tenants or visitors saw him, through the afternoon hours, they wondered what he did for a living because he never *seemed* to be working.

He was very creative and acted in some of the local little theatre productions.

One of the tenants on the second floor was a blonde woman with capcut hair who wore front laced bluejeans and sweat-shirts. She worked at one of the famous coffeeshouses in the evenings, and during the day she worked as a personal manager-agent for recording artists.

She always had trouble with parking tickets because she never seemed to be able to read the various parking signs in the vicinity, or remember them from previous tickets.

A large number of now famous actors and actresses lived in the building, from time to time, when they first came to Hollywood. As they progressed into starring roles they moved on to more luxurious apartments and homes in Beverly Hills, Brentwood, and Bel Air.

One young man who lived in a small apartment in the rear, over the garages, was arrested by plainclothesmen one day. It seems he was one of the biggest heroin pushers in southern California.

We often sat around the pool, during my convalescence, sunning and chatting. We got to know one another and it was a comradely running back and forth, borrowing a glass of gin, a package of cigarettes, books, and such. Most everyone was helpful and neighborly, yet there was the proper measure of privacy at all times so that people ignored, at least visibly, what they knew you didn't want to talk about or have others "observe." It was the kind of southern California style of living that newcomers don't understand until they are accepted and a part of the method.

One day there was a large group sitting around the pool when Janie came down to sun, something she rarely had time for. The conversation was calm and pleasant until someone asked her how things were going.

"Jesus Christ, I've doubled my price and I've been so busy you wouldn't *believe* it. You'd think I was *giving* it away!"

There was a deadly silence that lasted for several moments.

Then everyone began talking at once, about any number of subjects.

Late that afternoon, Jack, the columnist, came over to the pool and spoke to me.

"I'm doing a play in Beverly Hills," he said, "and I wondered if you might want to do the women's hair for the show. It might be kind of fun for you."

"Gee, I don't know. . . ." I wondered aloud. "I'm still under treatment and I'm not supposed to be doing much work yet."

He explained that this was a little theatre production and would last only a couple of weekends. It was a "showcase" musical for the profession only. Producers, agents, directors and casting people would see it, and the performers get jobs through it.

"It won't be much work for you. You'll only be doing the hair for the three leading women. Oh, and perhaps tell the girls in the singing and dancing choruses how to wear their hair. It's a turn-of-the-century period musical. You remember the movie, 'Tree Grows in Brooklyn,' and Shirley Booth did the musical of it on Broadway about a decade ago?"

It sounded like a lot of fun. It had been years since I worked in show business and I was itching to return to the atmosphere of greasepaint and the excitement of audiences again even though it meant backstage. I decided to go to a couple of rehearsals and talk it over with the director.

He talked me into the job and said I had full control of the hair styles for the show. Then he introduced me to the three leading ladies.

They were each different as day and night in personality, and seemed like wonderfully interesting people. I was happy Jack had suggested I work the show.

This was completely different from the part of show business I had been connected with in my past. It turned out I was setting the women's hair in the late afternoons and would comb them out at the theatre before the show. They shared the star's dressing room and I ended up helping them with costume changes and standing in the wings to hand them props. In one scene I had to

guide the leading lady onstage to her position in the blackout, otherwise she would have broken her neck.

It was a very busy and difficult production and there were hundreds of props and pieces of furniture to be moved about. At various times I had to be here and there to help move things off and onstage.

Then there was the difficulty of many different people being needed for atmosphere in short, quick scenes and I ended up playing the old-fashioned ice-cream vendor in one scene. When a cast member became sick I was asked to portray the Italian organ grinder in my set of things-to-do.

I found everyone connected with the production was vital, creative, and exciting. After performances, we had cast parties, midnight breakfasts and get-togethers for cocktails—and I found that some of the people joined these productions because they could “make out.” Theatrical people, regardless of individual taste, are often fairly liberal in sexual expression and understanding.

One of the women I coiffed went on to performances in some of the top films of the past few years. Another was the wife of a leading television director. She originally did the lead on Broadway and her ex-husband is now married to an Academy Award winner. The third of the leading women was an ex-Broadway hooper who was trying to make it in Hollywood. She was married to a pediatrician who was willing to invest any amount of money to promote her success.

When I did my bits in the performances, I put on theatrical make-up and had a ball. I had on more make-up than any other ten people in the cast. This was so much better, I thought, than drag—*this was showbiz!*

Because of my weak eye, I had to wear an eyepatch most of the time, and it fitted in character with the role of the Italian organ grinder. I was trying to look as authentic as possible. I considered wearing a white eyepatch for the role of the ice-cream vendor but thought better of it. My paste-on beard was already upstaging the leading lady.

The production was held over several weeks because of its successful casting, mounting and performances. We did twenty-three performances instead of the originally planned six.

When it was finished one of the leading women asked me to continue doing her hair for other productions she was scheduled to do. We began with her appearance in "Show Boat" with Andy Devine at the Circle Arts Theatre in San Diego. Then, "Gypsy" at the Music Circus in Sacramento, and "At Liberty," a dance-drama by Tennessee Williams, in Long Beach. We traveled to these various cities and after doing her hair for each performance I would roam around through the cities during the day. It was relaxing enough, and I found I'd gained a certain amount of prestige as the star's personal hairdresser.

When I returned to Los Angeles my reputation preceeded me. The leading lady for "The Miracle Worker" at the Players Gallery Theatre, and the leading woman for "Blood, Sweat, and Stanley Poole" at the Players Ring Theatre, asked me to do their coiffures. These productions were followed by doing hair for the actresses in productions of "Sabrina Fair," "Out of the Frying Pan," and "Ladies of the Jury."

Then I met a very attractive man, an artist, who wanted to do a portrait of me. It was soon a life-sized oil of me in a riding habit. I, who'd ridden everything in Griffith Park *but* a horse.

I started buying his work because I liked his style. And I began to place it in art galleries around Los Angeles for re-sale. But Art's a slow process and I wasn't getting rich promoting paintings. I was left with dozens of paintings which I now use for wedding, birthday and anniversary gifts.

The doctor told me salon work was too nerve-racking and I shouldn't plan to return to it. I had been doing hair exclusively for the shows but wasn't certain I wanted to return to fulltime beauty work.

I had to seek a new profession.

I'd heard actors in the production talking about their "Answering Service." They were continually calling on the phone to "check" with their services.

And some of them were continually upset because their service was fouling up their messages. I checked into how a Service was run. It seemed like an interesting field.

I moved out of my convalescent room, since there was a vacancy, and took an apartment on the south side of the building. When I transferred my belongings, I didn't know, nor realize, that it would be home, and every kind of business, for the next four years.

As soon as I moved I considered operating my own telephone answering service. I felt I could offer a conscientious service and make certain actors and other clients got their messages correctly, not like I'd heard backstage. I was "confined" at home anyway, and this would be a solution as to what to do with myself.

I got a telephone! Out went the shingle again.

I put an ad in the Los Angeles Times:

24 HOUR TELEPHONE ANSWERING SERVICE

\$4 a month.

OLDFIELD 61661

For three days I sat next to the phone. Nothing happened.

Jack came up from time to time to help. But there was nothing to do. We sat around and drank pots and pots of coffee.

Finally, the fourth day, a middle aged woman knocked at the door. She'd read the ad and wanted to take the Service. She had applied for a new job and wanted to use the Service as her phone because while job-hunting she couldn't be home to answer her own.

While this explanation was going on I handed a note I had written to Jack, saying to him, "Will you pick up these things at the market for me?" He left.

Following my instructions in the note he telephoned me every two or three minutes like incoming calls for the Service. I was so busy answering Jack's calls I didn't have time to fill out her application.

Finally, I said to one of the "calls," "Yes, Jack should be back

from the market any minute now." That did it. He caught the clue and came back.

The woman asked how *long* I had been in business.

"Oh, I've been in business for *years!*" I said. She hadn't asked *what* business!!

She left. I had a client. I was a telephone answering service. I now had \$4 with which to operate the Service. She checked in every hour. I couldn't leave the apartment because she might "check in." She stayed with the Answering Service for eight months. And got two messages. But she checked in eight to ten times a day for her messages.

There was a little apartment-sized desk in a corner of one of the rooms and this became the business office. I had \$100 and went to the telephone company business office to have extra lines put in right away. They wanted \$100 deposit for *each* line. I finally talked the representative into giving me two lines for my first deposit. This would be refunded to me at the end of the first twelve months.

It took the telephone company three weeks to put in the two lines. By that time I had 32 customers on the Service. People began to call in at two and three in the morning to find out about joining the Answering Service. Since the ad said 24 Hour Service, customers would call in the middle of the night to see if someone was actually answering the phone.

And new customers, who'd just taken the Service, would also call at that hour to check for the same reason. I found that in Los Angeles there were a lot of Night People who were up at that hour which was just a normal part of their day.

One man called and said, "I'm running an ad to sell my car."

"I said, "You'll have to pay your first and last month."

"All right," he said, "I'll have my wife bring the money over. We're selling our new Cadillac. And we want to use the Answering Service immediately."

"Fine. We'll start taking messages for you as soon as your fee is in the office."

We couldn't call *him*. *We* didn't have his telephone number. His

wife paid the fee but neglected to fill out an application for him. She took the form with her and said she would put it in the mail. They never did. We had to wait until one of them called for their messages and they had dozens of calls per day.

Later, I found out he was a car thief. He'd been running the Cadillac ad and would find out just what kind of model and color people wanted, and steal one like it and sell it to *his* customer. He finally got caught.

Another man signed up who didn't want his wife to pick up his calls as they were from his girl friends. "If my wife calls, tell her I have *no* messages!"

The movie extras who joined would call in every few hours to give "locations." They would be at this or that bar, restaurant, or address until such-and-such an hour. If anyone called, you were to call them at that "location" to give them the message. They usually had moved on to another "location" by the time you called to give a message at their last "location."

One of the customers was a rest home in central California who gave a long description of their place on the application. They didn't understand that an Answering Service is essentially a quick, short Service whereby you take the name and phone number of the caller for the client who is temporarily out or away from his own phone and relay that information to the client so he can return the call, thereby never *missing* any calls.

People would call in to answer the rest home's advertisement and ask all kinds of unanswerable questions about it.

"How far away is this?"

"If you'll give me your number I'll have them call you and tell you about it," I'd say.

"Well, is it more than fifty miles out of town?" they went on.

"If you'll give me your number they'll call you right back, sir. I have another call coming in. I'll have to put you on *Hold*." Sometimes you had to explain how a message service worked in order to get them off the lines.

There were people who wouldn't give their names or phone numbers and this created a problem because it was then impossible to make the connection between the called and the caller. This

was a message service, not a direct line service. But callers didn't understand.

Before long I had to move the furniture out of the apartment and move in more office equipment. Some of the customers came in to use the telephone from the "office." I had to install a pay phone to eliminate this problem. The apartment became a series of partitions and work areas as we expanded.

As an extra we offered mail service. Customers who wished a degree of anonymity used the Answering Service as their telephone and address. They received all mail through the Answering Service, and their correspondents knew only the office address as the client's own. A few people would order or purchase things and have the bills sent to our "mail" address and never pay their bills. If we didn't have their home addresses the bills they'd accumulated sometimes were never paid. But we were not a conscience. We were a business Answering Service.

Customers came in at all hours to collect their mail, even at three in the morning. They did everything *but* pay their bills, including, at times, their Answering Service bill. But that was easy enough to control. They didn't receive telephone messages unless they were paid up—in advance.

Every call was an emergency. Nobody seemed to call anyone unless it was dire emergency. And we had to locate the client and transfer the message. To some callers saying, "Hello" was an emergency call.

I put a large sign on the apartment door, giving the office hours:

9 A.M. to 9 P.M.

TELEPHONE ANSWERING SERVICE OFFICE HOURS
NO EXCEPTIONS.

It was the only way to begin getting control of the situation.

For weeks I was up 24 hours a day. I would doze off for an hour or two, occasionally, through the early morning hours but not for long. The phones were always ringing. It was *just what the doctor ordered!*

I had to have help. Jack helped me part time for awhile, when he had time to spare, but it got to the point where I had to have people working in shifts. In the mornings there were always Wake-Up calls to be made. Sometimes I was so tired and sleepy it was next to impossible to wake up myself let alone the customers. Things just kept growing, and ringing.

In time I was so busy I didn't have time to explain the Answering Service to new clients who inquired. I took their addresses and sent a young man out in the evening to talk to them about Service, in their homes.

It was then that Mickey came to work for me full time. He was a seldom working nightclub comic and actor who'd worked in a number of other answering services. But he had apparently seen "Bells are Ringing" and couldn't get over it.

Mickey was continually playing good samaritan, listening to sob stories, soothing people's troubles, getting jobs or parts for actors on the Service. He was an excellent worker but he was so busy with his involvement in the lives of the clients that it became annoying.

A lot of people who took the Answering Service were on the lam or doing something *slightly* illegal. We had call-boys, prostitutes, men who were cheating on their wives, people who were avoiding bill-collectors; an assortment of losers.

One young man was a real entrepreneur. He was a professional Elsa Maxwell and made his living by it. It was a means of people getting together socially. What they did then was their business. But it was made convenient through his services. He was a professional party thrower.

He charged \$3 per person to attend the party and gave the Answering Service number to everyone he met. They would call in each evening asking "Where is the party tonight?" After we gave the detailed instructions they would attend the social party and pay their \$3 at the door. *He* actually wasn't doing anything illegal. The party was at a different location every evening.

There were a number of masseurs on the Service. They had various kinds of businesses going.

Dixie came to work for me from one of the other answering

services in town. She was well-built, young and deceptively charming. She had a wonderfully sexy voice.

Everyone who called in wanted to make her. And they'd come to the office to try and date her. She was a good employee but was constantly falling in love, for two or three days at a time.

A lot of the people in the apartment building subscribed to the Answering Service and came in and out for messages. They soon discovered having a telephone answering service was a very practical and worthwhile thing in one's life.

One of the customers called in one night and said her water had been shut off because she hadn't been able to pay the bill. She wanted to know if she could come over and take a bath.

Another girl had been locked out of her apartment and wouldn't be able to get in until morning at which time she could get a duplicate key from the manager. She came over and slept on my couch in the little reception area by the pay phone.

My mother would bring a plate of dinner up to me most evenings. I didn't have the time to go out to eat or prepare meals. Everything else had to be phoned up or sent in. There were times when I didn't leave the apartment for months.

I'd fixed up a little section of the apartment, what was left, as a bedroom-living quarters for me, but the only use I got from it was to sleep for a few hours occasionally.

I kept adding new telephone lines. I prepared and send out a monthly "newsletter" to all the members of the Service. They exchanged want ads and some got to know each other. During the quieter hours, especially early in the morning, lonely people would call in and "visit," for hours. To them it was a touch with a "friend."

Whenever the telephone company had to do any adding lines, or servicing, they would "accidentally" and unfortunately shut off *all* of the Services. For hours! It got to be very complicated because it often meant loss of work for some of the customers and a great deal of explanation on the part of the Answering Service.

When the Christmas holidays came I hadn't been out of the apartment since Thanksgiving Day. I decided to leave the Answer-

ing Service in the hands of the employees. And went off to have dinner with the relatives and family. I left Mickey in charge.

Returning, I found he'd got drunk and had fallen sound asleep. The phones were ringing off the walls.

Police came by, periodically, wanting addresses of various clients. Bill collectors came for the same reason. But we found we weren't obligated to divulge any information. We never gave out an address or a personal phone number. And legally, we didn't have to.

You got to know people from the messages they received. Even if you had never seen them or knew nothing about them previously. You could deduce various things when they received all their calls only from men, or women, or at certain times of the day, or night. In that respect it was intriguing.

On Valentine's Day we read to the clients a romantic poem I'd written, when they called in. We were very enthusiastic on holidays and seasonal things.

Sometimes, when it became a problem, we had to lie to the customers. If one operator took a message and you couldn't read the writing, you could always say, "They didn't leave a message."

Or, if you couldn't read the message, or the operator had written only part of a number down, you merely covered up by saying, "I'm sorry, they didn't leave a number."

Many clients called about their mail. They were supposed to come in and pick it up. But they always called and wanted to know, "Who's it from?"

At first we told them the address on the return corner. And then they'd say, "Well, open it and read it to me."

We finally learned a stock phrase: "We can't do that. It's against government regulations." It seemed to settle the problem.

Many of the clients, especially those in show business, had more than one name. One man had eight, and it got pretty confusing. And a few other people used more than one name for various reasons we didn't question.

The explanations were too complicated to remember in most instances. "If Jane, Anne, and Gladys call, I'm out of town. If

Mary, Bill, or John call, ring me right away. Anne, Gladys and John will ask for me as Mr. Wilson and Jane, Bill and Mary will ask for Mr. Smith. A Miss Brown might call occasionally and she knows me as Mr. Green."

And so it went.

One day a woman called and demanded, "How soon can you come over?"

"For what?" I asked.

"To fix my sewing machine!" One of the customers had put an ad in the paper using the Answering Service number. We had to make her understand she wanted one of our clients and not us.

Another customer used the Service number for a mail order business and the volume of mail we had to handle began to look like the Post Office during the Christmas holidays.

Help was impossible to get or keep. And impossible to depend on. In between other problems I was going through a constant process of interviewing and training operators. My paralysis had, over a long period of time, been improving. But the final few months of the Telephone Answering Service, I could tell it was back-tracking. I had to do something.

I called another answering service on Sunset Boulevard which dealt mostly with actors, called "Actor Dial."

"Do you want to buy an Answering Service?" I asked George.

"Yes, when?"

"Today!" I said.

He came to the office and we began plugging up the holes immediately. It took three weeks for the telephone company to dismantle all the equipment.

But I was going to get back to living like a human being again. I knew I couldn't continue with the Answering Service.

When the last piece of equipment was removed I tore out all of the partitions and returned the apartment to some semblance of living quarters.

I left for the beach for a rest. And I made sure there was *no* phone.

Madams Can Be Made

THE REST at the beach was wonderful.

It was so stimulating to watch all the bodies on the sand. It was kind of window-shopping therapy.

I spread out my Japanese straw matting and put up my back-rest, turned on the transistor radio, and placed my Pan-Am satchel with the extra towel in it at my side, *just in case* I went in the water. Occasionally, I *did* go in the water. It was marvelous riding the waves, and often bumping into all kinds of bodies.

I carried a deck of cards just in *case* someone stopped by who wanted to "play cards." I carried a supply of books. I sometimes *read* them but the titles were conversation pieces. Not dirty titles, heavens! Just Best Sellers, with egghead names.

I got situated and set up housekeeping for the day when I thought I knew *that* body. The more I looked the more I was *sure*.

"Yoooo hooo! Yooooooo hooooo, Doug!" He strolled over. I removed my sunglasses. I wanted to get the full view of the body.

I looked up at him standing there. It was the first time I'd seen him so nude.

"Well!"

He squatted down in front of me. His bathing suit was tight, but not enough.

"Well, you're a pleasant surprise," I said.

"Well, how did you ever manage to get away from the Telephone Service?" he asked. "You *never* get away from there," he laughed.

"Oh, . . . I do *now*!"

"How's that? Things must be pretty good. Do you have some reliable help?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I *sold* the Answering Service."

"You sold it?"

He looked both surprised and startled. "Oh, gosh, who did you sell it to? You handled my calls so well. Will they do a decent job?"

I nodded. "I sold it to a very good place, Actor Dial, don't worry."

"You know," he continued, "my customers don't like talking to women operators and you had a lot of men working there for you."

I shrugged.

"Well, what difference does *that* make?"

"Huh? A good phone service makes or breaks a hustler."

We agreed on that, but I added, "You already have so *many* steady people calling you, you're not going to be hurt too much. It's over with now . . . you'll just have to ride with it and see how they do."

I put the glasses back on.

"Have you had lunch yet?" I inquired.

After all, Doug Norton *is* attractive, I thought, and there's nothing like an interesting lunch with something lovely to view across the table. It had been too long since I sat across the table from anything appealing, and from the bodies I could see around he was the icing on the cake.

"I have to work on my tan," he said. "Keeping my body brown is more appealing for selling. Being a blond, I have to work at it harder. Competition, you know."

We went to lunch at my Hotel.

First we went up to my room for a drink.

"You know, I usually don't like blonds," I said to him. "In fact, you're the most appealing blond I've ever seen." He smiled.

Such a gorgeous smile. He was really a beauty . . . and so butch-looking, too.

"How long've you been hustling for a living?"

"Since I was fifteen. And I'm twenty-seven now."

"Twenty-seven!? You don't look a *day* over 23!"

I was amazed. If *he* was 27, I was 92!

"I never lie about my age," he said. "If they ask how old I am, I say, 'Well, how old do you *think* I am?' and whatever they say, I say, 'That's right!'"

We went down to lunch. I complained that my back was bothering me from sitting at the Service board so long.

"Well, I'm a *masseur*. I can fix that up. I'll take care of it as soon as we finish lunch."

How sweet!

We returned to the room and he said, "Take it off and get on the bed," pointing to my bathing suit.

I did.

"Lie on your stomach first," he instructed as I rolled over. I lay down and waited, and waited.

I turned to see what was happening. He was removing his swim trunks and was tying a short towel around his waist.

"Oh, you don't have to wear that!" I said.

"We *always* do this when go to give a massage on housecalls."

"Oh, that's right," I wondered aloud, "you work for that man . . . Mr. Bean. What happens when you go on housecalls?"

"Just like *this*. We get into the towel and start massaging. And one thing leads into another through the massage. It's a kind of routine. Actually, the massage is just a *front*."

"A front?"

"Yeah, you *can't* advertise "Sex for Sale" but you can advertise *massage*. *Young masseurs!*"

"Are they *all* young?" I asked.

"*Have* to be!" he said. "Well, some of them are like me—a *little* older but young looking. But all of the men who call us only want young boys. Most masseurs who hustle are between 21 and 26 . . . the younger the better."

I was so comfortable. He was *so* easy to talk with.

"Ooooooh, that feels good, right there . . . right across the small of my back. My! You have strong hands! You have a *wonderful* touch."

His hands moved down to my thighs, near the center of my legs. The strokes were deep and exciting. So divine!

It was such a marvelously strange feeling. He worked as though his hands were talented! He worked every spot until my heart beat faster and I could feel the warmth of his body near mine.

His legs spraddled my cheeks and he massaged my shoulder blades. His hands traveled south as he shifted his body lower.

As he did, I could feel that he himself was excited. He was working now on my upper thighs. It made me warm and tingly.

My hips rotated in frustration.

I felt the hair of his head brush across my buttocks. I felt his warm breath and moist lips. His teeth took dozens of little nibbling bites of my cheeks. First one side, then the other . . . then in circles.

I reared up in ecstasy.

His strong but tender hands quickly turned my hips as he placed me on my back. And all the while he continued his aggression . . . nibbling at my sides and up, to my chest.

He lifted my legs into the air. He snuggled between them and placed them danglely over his shoulders.

The next sound I remembered was the water running in the bathroom.

"Do you want to shower first?" he asked.

"I don't care."

I was too exhausted and sweaty to mind. We got into the shower together.

We got back on the bed afterwards and relaxed, chatting aimlessly. But I didn't know he had definite things in mind.

He began to steer the conversation towards his hustling and told me how tired he was of working for Mr. Bean.

"I used to work in a whore house myself, Honey. I can understand what you're going through," I said.

He snuggled against me.

"I'd like to be working for someone like you. I'm fed up with Mr. Bean. That's what you ought to do," he suggested. "You know, now that you don't have the Answering Service. Really, you'd make a great madam!"

We talked on.

"Well, what prices do the boys get?" I asked. I'd never really been interested enough to inquire.

"Fifteen dollars an hour." And he began using "we" in the conversation. "*We* could do it just like Mr. Bean does."

"How?"

"We could advertise in the Hollywood Reporter, Daily Variety, and the Los Angeles Times . . . as young male masseurs. And we'd give our phone number and the number of the Answering Service. Didn't you notice all Mr. Bean's calls were from *men*?"

"Yes, but they didn't tell us what they were calling for! I had my suspicions, of course," I told him.

"Well, they were answering the ad for young masseurs but what they wanted, actually, was a date . . . a *sex* date. The massage is just a front, a come-on. Once we got them on the telephone, Mr. Bean, who's a madam, would ask what they preferred and he'd set up a sex date for them with someone he hustled.

"Some like blonds, some brunets, some like 'em tall, some short. And a lot of times what they want depends on the price of the date. Sometimes they want *more* than one boy. Sometimes it's for all night."

Doug shifted up on one elbow and looked over at me.

"Why, *you'd* be good because of your sexy voice over the telephone," he said as he went on. "Mr. Bean treats the clients like dogs. He talks terrible to them and he *ruins* business. Besides, *he's* no competition."

Doug was dead serious. "God, the two of us could work together like crazy. Think it over!" he pleaded.

Without my asking, he decided to spend the night with me. He'd gone to bed with me for his own reasons which I hadn't realized at first.

"Well, if you're a hustler, how come you didn't *charge* me?" I asked.

"I saw you'd make a good madam, hustling *me*, and I wanted to give you a good time," he replied. "Frankly, to convince you I could make you a fortune."

He called Mr. Bean and told him he was taking the night off.

Mr. Bean was *furious* with him because he'd already lined up some definite dates for that night. Doug was his best boy.

We both got excited over the new prospect and drove back to my apartment in Los Angeles to continue our plans, talking into the wee hours of the morning.

That morning, we began tackling the things we talked of all through the night, preparing the way for *business*.

"First of all," Doug said, "it's \$9.40 for a two line ad in the L. A. Times for a week. If you get it in by 11:30 this morning, it'll be out in tomorrow's paper and will be on the newsstands at seven o'clock tonight."

We ran our first advertisement.

On the way back from the newspaper office in downtown Los Angeles we stopped by and put additional ads in the Hollywood Reporter and other trade papers.

The afternoon was spent shopping and bringing several items from Doug's apartment to mine since my place was to be the "working area."

"Well, we'd better stop and get a bottle," he said. It's always good to loosen them up. Puts them in a better frame of mind. They're more at ease."

We bought a bottle of whiskey, bottles of body lotion, talcum powder, and at his place we got some soft lightbulbs, vases, and some lovely large, interesting ashtrays.

Out went the shingle again!

Doug also brought along some 8x10 professional portraits of himself.

"You'll be needing these in time," he said.

When we got back to the apartment we checked the linen supply and the piles of towels and I phoned another boy, Bruce, who came over.

Bruce was tall, slender, black-haired and very good looking. He was Mr. Bean's current protégé. But he was fed up with it.

In order to work for Mr. Bean, the hustlers had to sleep with the fat, old Auntie and keep him satisfied. They only had to do it

once, a kind of audition, unless they were selected "favorites," and then had to *take care* of him regularly.

Bruce was tired of placating him in exchange for making a living.

Doug thought it would be a good idea not to use my real name. The boys would use only first names and he thought I should have a "name" to use.

"What's wrong with *Ken*?" I asked.

"Just take my word for it. It's *not* a good idea to use your own name. Let's see. . . ."

"How's Sally Marlowe?" I wondered aloud.

Doug winced.

"Polly Marlowe?"

"No!"

Becky? I mused. . . . No, I've used that once before. . . . "I've got it . . . Belle Marlowe!"

"Oh, for Chrissakes, be *serious*! Those are all women's names," Doug said firmly. "They're all madams already."

"How's *Mr. Madam*?" I asked.

"Yeah? You want to get busted the first day?" he replied.

There was a long silence. Then I remembered. "Well, when I was a little boy my grandmother used to call me, '*Sonny*'."

Doug repeated the name to himself and nodded. "There's *nothing* wrong with it. Sonny!!! We'll settle on that."

Sonny it was.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"Six o'clock."

"Papers out yet?"

"Another hour and the papers will be out," Doug affirmed. We were still busy discussing things when the phone rang.

"Are you the masseur?" the voice asked.

"Yes," I said. "There're three of us." I sounded nervous, to myself. It was our *first* call.

"I'd like to have a massage. Do you have a *young* boy?"

Everybody was *always* young . . . twenty-two . . . or twenty-three at the very oldest. I said so to the customer.

"How much is a massage?"

"Fifteen dollars," I said, very firmly.

"Is that a *complete* massage?"

"Yes, that's a *complete* massage." If you mean what I *think* you do, I thought.

"What's the boy you're gonna send over look like?"

"He's young, blond, blue-eyed, has a clean complexion, *large* personality and he's very versatile. And he gives a satisfying European massage," I said, trying to remember everything Doug and I had discussed beforehand.

"Well, that sounds pretty good. How soon can he get here?"

"As soon as you give me the address and your phone number," I told him.

"What do you want my phone number for?"

"I don't send any boy out until I verify the phone number," I explained.

When he'd heard the first part of the conversation, Doug went into the bathroom and began showering. I hung up the receiver, then lifted it again and dialed the number the man had given me. It was the same voice.

I said, "The boy's on his way."

"Okay. Thanks a lot." I hung up.

"Well, we're in business. . . ."

"Oh, you handled that *fine*!" Doug said. "See how easy it is? You made yourself \$5 already."

I was standing in the bathroom doorway, talking to him, when the phone rang again.

R-R-R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Hello. Is this the party who had the ad in the paper?"

"Yes, it is."

"Do you pose for pictures?" he wanted to know.

"Do you mean in the nude or with clothes on?"

"No, in the nude," he said. "I'm an artist."

"Well, yes," I said, shrugging. Why not?

"Well, would you mind telling me your measurements?"

"I'm six foot tall, blond, blue-eyed. . . ."

"How much do you. . . ."

"168 pounds," I interjected, before he could finish.

"How much do you charge?"

"\$15 an hour. \$25 for two hours."

"Wouldn't it be cheaper if I came over there?"

"No," I said, "it's the same price either way."

"Are you built large?" he wanted to know.

"Well, I told you I was six foot tall."

"That's not what I meant. I mean *downstairs!*"

"I'm sorry! I don't talk that way on the phone!!" I hung up the receiver with a bang.

"What'd you have . . . a freak calling you?" Doug asked.

"Well, don't get upset. You'll have a lot of that before we're through with this." He was ready to leave. "I'll be at this guy's house for about an hour. I'll call you from his phone when I'm finished to find out if you have another date lined up."

"Okay!" With that he was out the door. As he left I called after him, "Be *good*, and hurry back!"

R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Helloooo."

"Is this the masseur?"

"Yes, it is. May I help you?"

"Yes, I hope you can. I wonder if you might have a young boy that can do something special for me. I want a young boy to spank. Would you be able to provide that?"

"I think we can arrange that. What's your address?" I asked.

"Oh, he *can't* come to my place!"

"I see. You mean you want to come to the studio?"

He seemed to be hedging around. "But I want to see the boy first."

"Well," I said, "that will come a little higher. That's \$25." Then I added, "\$25 an hour."

"Twenty five dollars is pretty high, isn't it?"

I paused a minute. Then I went on. "Look, I don't want to talk like this over the telephone."

"Alright," he said, "I'll come up and see you."

I gave him the address.

R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Is this the masseur?"

"Yes, it is. May I help you?"

"Do you have a masseur you could send over right away?"

"Yes, I have a boy I could send out right now."

"What's he look like?"

"He's tall, and slender, weighs about 165. He has black hair and he's nice and young. I'm sure you'd find him very satisfactory."

"Will he do anything for the \$15?"

I considered this for a moment and said, "Within reason. . . ."

"I want him to tie me up, and then beat me."

"All right," I said. He gave me the address and phone number. I sent Bruce on his way.

There was a knock on the door. It was a man in his forties with grey temples and a crewcut. He was wearing levis and a white shirt.

"I'm the man who wanted the young boy," he said. "I want one I can turn over my knee and paddle."

"Well, I think I have someone for you," I told him. I described Doug to him. "Just a minute, I think I have a picture of him here some place," I said, walking over to the desk and opening and shutting various drawers.

I finally pulled the top drawer open, for the second time and drew out the photograph of Doug.

"Oh, yes, here it is."

"I'll drive by the corner," he said, after looking at the photo. "Can you have the boy stand on the corner and I'll drive past and then pick him up?"

When Doug got back I sent him to the corner to wait. I told him the man who was interested would drive by, and if he liked him, he would stop and pick him up.

About twenty five minutes later Doug came back into the apartment. "Well, a couple of guys went by and looked at me but nobody picked me up!"

As soon as he'd come back in, the phone rang.

R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Hey! I saw that kid you sent out on the corner . . . he's as old as I am."

"Yeah? Are *you* kidding? He's *twenty-three!* May I ask how old *you* are?"

He didn't answer.

"You dirty old man!" I yelled at him and hung up the phone.

Doug said, "Have a cup of coffee." We did.

"Well, here's your first five dollars." Bruce came in the door, just then, and joined us at coffee. As I was about to take a sip the phone rang again.

R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Whew!" I exclaimed as I grabbed it and breathed a "Hello?" into it.

He asked for a general description of the boy and the price. We talked for a minute or two and he said, "My legs are awfully sore. Will he rub my legs?"

"Yes, he'll rub your legs . . . yes, all over."

"Well, I'm young myself and I don't want an old man coming over."

I explained again that I only handled *young* boys.

"Well, what's the *other* boy look like?"

I described Bruce. I'd already described Doug to him.

"Well, which one do you think I'd like best?"

"I really don't know. They're both excellent masseurs."

"How long will he stay?"

"He'll stay an hour . . . a full hour," I went on.

"Has he had many calls tonight?"

"No," I sighed heavily. "You're the first one tonight," I lied.

"Well, you see, I don't want one that's tired."

"Yes, I can understand that," I said. "But, young boys are never tired."

"What time is it now?"

"It's about ten," I told him, looking at the desk-clock.

"Well, could he come over about 12:30?"

"Okay, I can have him there at 12:30."

"Oh, and he'll be quiet, won't he? I live in an apartment building and I wouldn't want him waking the neighbors up when he came."

"My boys are very quiet when they arrive."

"Okay. And you're *sure* I'll like him?"

"Oh, you'll love him."

He paused. Then, "Maybe I ought to try them both. Is that cheaper?"

"No, it's the same price. \$30 for the two."

"Oh. Well, if you say this Doug that you have is the best, I'll try him. I'm only 27 myself and I want a *young* boy."

"I understand, sir." I looked at the boys who wondered when I was going to get off the line. "You *do* want someone *tonight*?"

"Well, yes!"

"You'll have to make up your mind so I can send you one. I have to get off this phone. I have other calls coming in, you know."

"Oh, all right. I'll try Doug this once and see if I like him."

Dizzy closet queen! Sounds like one, I thought, as I hung up the phone.

Later, when Doug came back from the call I asked him, "How was the trick?"

"He was a *mess*! Just some nellie old ribbon counter clerk. He had the lights down low, cologne on the sheets, and was wearing a red shortie robe when I got there. Gay as pink ink! I think he just wanted to *visit*. I had to listen to his whole freaking life history before we went to bed. She's *just* a lonely queen. But I made her happy. Oh, and she says she *loves* me."

"That's nice," I commented. "I hope he calls again."

"Oh, he'll be calling again."

R-R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Hello. . . ."

"Is this the masseur?"

"Yes, it is. . . ."

"Do you give enemas?"

I dropped my mouth, thought about it, and replied, "Yes, I think that can be arranged. You sure you don't want a nurse rather than a masseur? Well, I have a young friend of mine I can send right over . . . oh, fine."

I took the address and number.

"Well, we're off and running again!"

R-R-R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Hello?"

"Is this the masseur who had the ad in the Times?"

"Yes."

"I know it's awfully late but is it too late to get a massage?"

"No, I could send a boy over."

"Oh, you have more than one?"

"Yes, but I have only one available right now. He is tall, young, and slender. He has black hair and is very attractive. If you had called earlier I have dozens of boys available that I'm *sure* you'd like. But this boy is the only one I have available right now. I feel sure you'll be satisfied."

"I see. Does he have nice feet?"

"Nice feet? Oh, yes, he has *beautiful* feet." He thought I should send him over.

"Off you go, doll," I said to Bruce. "Yeah . . . he's a toe Queen. Be *good*, and hurry back!"

Whenever this man called, and it was often after that, I always told the boys before they were ready to leave, "Here is the address but wash your feet first . . . make *sure* your feet are *clean*."

R-R-R-R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

"Hello. . . ."

"This is Mr. Johnson. I'd like to know if I can get a massage?"

"Why certainly, Mr. Johnson."

There were, I was soon to find out, more Johnsons in Los Angeles than there were in the phone book.

Mr. Johnson took my address and thirty minutes later he arrived. He had a box in his hand and some packages.

He wanted to take photos. He was an old man with short grey hair. He brought along a six-pack of beer and some presents. There was shaving lotion, cologne, and some fancy cookies. Santa Claus had arrived.

He took pictures of Doug and myself together, in the nude, but he didn't want them. He just wanted to take them. He gave the photos to us. He wanted to be sure he'd get his money's worth. Long after his hour he was still hard to get rid of.

The phone kept ringing until the wee hours of the morning. As dawn came, I thought, thank God, we can all get some rest. But I was awakened at nine o'clock with a R-R-R-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-N-N-N-N-N-G-G-G!

It seemed never to stop. It was like the Answering Service all over again. The tricks didn't care whether they called at three in the morning or near morning's light. They expected immediate service. After all, we never closed.

Not *everybody* who called would make a date. They *wanted* it when *they* wanted it and you had to grab the date and the money while they were hot.

A lot of them were just inquirers. Some called just for kicks. They just wanted stimulating conversation and did their own work while we talked. If I became aware of it I'd hang up on them.

I was getting quite a following. A number of them called frequently and asked for different boys each time. But the repeat business was growing. I was getting *plenty* of "repeats and compliments."

Now I had a *new* problem. I had to find new boys. I'd told my boys to look around for possibilities and I did some looking myself. My first trip hunting for new talent was very successful.

I made an afternoon excursion and went to Griffith Park. I drove through Ferndell, off Los Feliz Boulevard, stopping at every turn in the road where a car was parked. I really didn't know what to say to any boy that I'd meet, as an opener.

Then I met Steve. He was in a red Jaguar.

I got out of my car and went back in the brush on a trail that wound up into the hills. It went on endlessly. I thought I was lost.

Here was a well-worn path and I stood, pausing, feeling someone was following me. I looked back.

It was Steve.

He stopped. I took four or five steps further and paused again. I found he had done the same. Then I turned to give him a profile view. He'd hitched his thumbs in his pockets and studied me without the direct-look approach.

I rocked my body back and forth and did a bump with my

abdomen. It was a warm day and I wiped my forehead with the back of my hand and undid the top buttons of my shirt. I rocked sideways a couple of times.

All the while he was studying me. Occasionally I turned and looked off in the opposite direction. He approached me slowly. I heard a twig break behind me but I didn't look at him.

I zipped up my trousers.

His brown shirt was completely open. He wore only blue denims and black leather thongs. He was six foot one, his dark blond hair was wavy with one attractive curl falling onto his forehead, and he had beautifully capped teeth. I smiled to myself. He was exactly what I was looking for.

I played gardener because the shrubbery was so *dry*. I *certainly* didn't want the park to burn down.

Whatever I did his actions imitated. I didn't rush to put it back and neither did he.

"My name's Steve," he said. It was evident I could use *him*. We chatted a moment and I invited him to the apartment. I told him I was a lust merchant.

I zipped up my trousers.

We drove the five miles back to my place. I found he and I lived only two blocks apart. He joined the staff that evening.

He was kept very busy.

Steve had hustled in New York. He was so handsome he looked like a movie star. In fact, sometimes, because he was so good-looking, people didn't want him.

Very often clients didn't want the boys too good-looking. Not ugly, but not *too* pretty. Pretty boys are often too conceited, generally dull in bed, and too commercial looking. Clients weren't interested in down-on-their-luck would-be actors. Muscle men weren't too exciting or successful because all they would do was lay back and show their muscles and, most of the time, with very little equipment. They made up in muscle what they lacked elsewhere. Although men would say they wanted this type they called back to complain, afterwards, because they were dull bed partners.

I found the best hustlers were average looking, wholesome

types, not nellie—more boyish, and not too experienced-looking.

The really good ones made the customers feel they were only doing it out of temporary necessity and weren't *really* professionals.

Several of my boys were married men, bisexuals; some were college students, office workers and some were just hustlers who worked at nothing else.

Not all of the boys did *everything* and that occasionally created a problem. Some did all things and didn't care whom they were with, but a few of the boys limited themselves as to that in which they would participate. I was soon to learn a couple of lessons from them.

Most hustlers aren't like female whores because unlike women, they'll cheat. They'll go with one man for free, charge another, and go free with still another.

Most of the boys are like people from *normal* life. But they're of a type—*oversexed*. They cheat themselves. If they couldn't sell enough sex each day, they'll give it away. So long as they get enough each day is all that matters to them.

In any group there are certain types. Most straight people think all homosexuals are alike. Even among homosexuals there are the same classifications of types of people as there are among heterosexuals. And there are gay people in *every* walk of life.

Just because you know a boy in the office is gay, it doesn't mean he's done all the things I've done in my life, or would do. Many would never do *any* of the things I've done. Most heterosexuals know *some* homosexuals even though they don't recognize them as such.

Some homosexuals cover up their "problem" very effectively and you'd *never* spot them. And some don't care whether or not you know they're gay. Many things in life are done in secret and *suspicious are not facts!*

There are female prostitutes but that doesn't make every woman a prostitute. There are a lot of gay boys but they're not *all* hustlers and drag queens. Many homosexuals go to gay bars who wouldn't *think* of hustling a trick. And if they do or do not *isn't really important*. Whose business *is* it besides their own?

In my private life most of my friendships are with heterosexuals and they do not fear or shun me.

Many a wife is married to a homosexual and doesn't know it. And sometimes neither does *he*! Most men have done something homosexual in their lives. But *few* will admit the fact until they've accepted their homosexuality.

Kinsey put the rate of homosexual incidence quite high. And all the critics howled "Foul!" But if the rate isn't as high as that why did so many married men with children come seeking my "call boys"?

Of course, as soon as women have the ring in men's noses, they let go of the waistline, the sweet tone, and the lovely appearance fades. They're so involved with family, and children, friends and obligations, they treat their husbands like just another thing that has to be handled through their day. They should study the geisha girl, and perhaps their husbands would stay home more nights.

I've had so many married men tell me they can't stand looking at their wives that I wish I'd kept count. But men felt they weren't cheating on their wives when they're with my boys, or another man. The psychology of our American adult morality says it is "wrong" only if he has his sex with another woman, prostitute or otherwise. When he's with the boys he's not cheating. But *he sure as hell is getting his satisfaction!*

Beware of those who talk too strongly against homosexuals or the women who yell too loudly—you should check out *their* husbands—because they must have something in their own lives to hide. They are usually associated close enough with the subject or they're too frightened, or too uneducated to know what to do about it, in their own lives.

The public is still carried along on such ancient myths that it's pathetic. Generally, homosexuals *don't* rape three year olds—boys or girls, nor do they kill people, nor do they give off a disease by being in the same room with *normal* people. Most publicized rape cases have been proven to be committed by heterosexuals. Homosexuals aren't lepers, you know. We're people.

There are no stereotypes among homosexuals just as there are none in any other area of sex. But realizing the human factor,

it's understandable that the public thinks "homosexuals" seduce children.

When I waltzed down the street or sat in a movie theatre, tricked up and down the Y halls or anywhere else, *I didn't force any man to bed*. He came of his own free will. I was just available.

A real "straight" heterosexual wouldn't see me standing there on the corner or, if he did, would ignore me. Men never climb into the feathers with you unless they *want* to do so. *It is impossible to entice any adult individual into a homosexual act unless he consents*.

Being around homosexuals doesn't affect heterosexual men *if* they are *sure of themselves*. Homosexuals don't concern themselves with men who are obviously not interested.

The only men I ever found afraid of homosexuals were those who *were* unsure of themselves, who were afraid of their own state of masculinity, and feared they might *lose* it.

Borderline cases are the *haters*. They do the most yelling about and against overt homosexuals.

Heterosexuals who have to get their *kicks* by going out to "beat up queers" are the ones who are *kidding themselves*. They talk about it boldly because they have to "prove" *they* aren't homosexuals.

Homosexuals are a minority group who are denied their human rights!

The public, usually with the aid of front page newspaper publicity, confuses and links mentally deficient who commit sex crimes with all homosexuals. *Most* homosexuals are *not* sex criminals except in the eyes of the law because laws are antiquatedly against morals, which should be intelligently relegated back to the province of religion and medicine.

American police departments make a big show of "wiping out" the homosexual element in their cities because it gives them great amounts of publicity and certainly makes them *look busy* to the Public Eye. And crime is often left unsolved because they're so busy with the morals of men who don't bother *other men who are not responsive*.

Vice squad officers are another breed. They certainly are "interested" in their work! Too many of them are *enjoying* the sexual favors of their entrapments *before* they get around to make the arrests. You'll never, however, find *those* statistics available. Nobody seems to have kept them!

One of our largest west coast cities does a huge business in homosexual entrapment. Annually, the city reaps enough from aggressive Vice Squad entrapments to enrich the coffers by half a million dollars in fines. And that's big business. It pays a lot of salaries. And the whole dirty method should be shocking. It is. But the only shocking the city promotes is convincing the citizenry a lot of homosexuals are dangerous. They neglect to inform them that these same homosexuals are very profitably used.

When entrapped, each homosexual pays an average fine of \$300 . . . for, inviting someone for a "cup of coffee." Or accepting an encouraging come-on, only to find bitter results rather than emotional pleasure.

If homosexuals ever organized, banding together for mutual protection and rights, like other minorities, they could exist without bondage as long as they publicly behaved themselves as thinking adults.

Well, busy days and nights certainly kept my apartment full. There were so many boys all over the place, we were bumping into one another. David was ironing clothes, Marty was showering, for the umpteenth time, Roy was doing the dishes, they were everywhere. And I was on the chaise lounge, holding court with a couple of "newcomers" at my feet. I certainly *enjoyed* my work. It was rather like being the Queen Bee in the middle of a hive. Things were humming.

I decided to have a Madame Sue meeting. "We should all think alike, and *do* alike. We gotta have a few laws," I said. "We're gonna make a few rules."

"Rules?"

"Laws?"

I told them about Madame Sue, but I didn't tell them about the periodic meetings *she* called. "If you're gonna work for me you're gonna walk the chalk. So here goes," I said.

Doug poured coffee and they gathered into a group around me. I told Doug to give Steve a massage—a “Complete” massage—while we watched.

It was very quiet except for a little heavy breathing. They enjoyed their work so.

I didn’t want to hear any more complaints from the customers. I wanted all the boys to study Doug’s “technique” and do likewise.

“I want you all to pay strict attention to this. The reason for this meeting is because I have been having a few complaints, such as not giving tricks their money’s worth, and you’re not to rush them, and some are not getting excited themselves or participating enough. Let’s *watch* the diets, and the waistlines. And my God! Come back home and *shower* after *every* date, or shower at the John’s house. And I don’t care if you’ve had *ten* a day. Got that!!

“Now for the rules:

1. IF THE DOOR IS CLOSED – DO NOT KNOCK. GO TO THE PHONE AND CALL.

“The door closed means we’re busy, the studio is in use. Wait at the swimming pool until I open the door.

2. DO NOT LEAVE THE PATIO ONCE YOU ARE THERE.

“In case I’ve talked you up and go to the pool and call one of you in, I want you *there*. Like you, Joe, I went to get you yesterday. I had sold you to a man and I couldn’t *find* you. At least slip a note under the door if you’ve got to leave.

3. PUSH OTHER BOYS WHEN YOU GO ON A CALL.

“Try to sell another boy. Not for my sake, dears, but for *yours*. We’ll *all* make more money.

4. IF TWO PEOPLE ARE ON CALL TO ONE TRICK’S HOUSE GIVE THE CUSTOMER THE WORKS.

“Don’t let one do all the work. I know of one date where one kept going to the bathroom and combing his hair while the other did all the work. So, work *evenly*.

5. GIVE EACH CUSTOMER HIS MONEY’S WORTH. AND TURN THE CUSTOMER ON.

"Do *not* rush! Don't be back here in twenty minutes from one customer and then give another client three hours! Roy, next time *telephone in* when you know you're detained.

6. DO NOT GET TOO CHUMMY WITH CUSTOMERS.

"Keep *everything* on a businesslike basis. They'll end up taking you out to dinner for nothing. First thing you know you'll be chippies, *giving* it away.

7. PUSH PARTIES.

"*Everyone* works then. Parties are such fun for all!

8. NO MORE THAN ONE PERSON IN THE MESSAGE STUDIO AT A TIME.

"It frightens away the clients when there are too many people in here. They might think they're walking into a Vice Squad trap.

9. IF YOU ARE ON THE PATIO, KEEP ESPECIALLY QUIET.

"As you all know, it's my mother's building and the tenants don't know what's going on. And mother thinks I'm *very* popular.

10. DO NOT TIE UP THE TELEPHONE TOO LONG.

"It's a *business* phone. Lost calls are lost business!

11. IF ASKED ABOUT SONNY'S SHARE--TELL THE CUSTOMER THAT YOU DO FAVORS FOR SONNY IN RETURN.

"It's none of their business what you give to have me arrange your social obligations.

12. DO NOT FREQUENT BARS, THE BOULEVARDS, OR THE PARKS.

"This kind of thing just cheapens you, down to a \$5 boy. Any time you *have* to go on the Boulevard, it's with me. We'll go in a group. There's *safety* in numbers.

13. BE BUTCH--BUT NICE!

"That's self-explanatory.

14. ALWAYS BEGIN WITH MESSAGE UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.

"That'll protect *you*, dears, just in case there's going to be trouble. If it would turn out to be a dud, you *are* giving a legitimate massage, and you'll *save* yourself. I'll try to cut down on

the *unnecessary* work when I know the massage is not necessary. But sometimes these bastards want their money's worth. So *begin* with the massage.

15. KEEP APPOINTMENTS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE.

"These last minute cancellations are *impossible*. I end up having to sometimes turn them myself and you *know* how I *hate* that. So let's have a stop to that.

16. PICK UP AND CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELVES WHEN YOU ARE AROUND THE STUDIO.

"Coffee cups, coke bottles, unmade beds when *you've* used the bed, that sort of thing is *out*. That includes using the bathroom and the kitchen too. I'm *not* paying my maid to pick up after any of *you*. You pick up around here when you are the cause, understand?

17. IF A DATE IS FOR MORE THAN \$15—SONNY GETS ONE THIRD, OVER EXPENSES (\$5 Expenses)—TIPS ARE YOUR OWN—BUT TELL SONNY.

"I can then inform the next one who tipped who, so you'll all be sure to give good performances. Then you will also earn tips when *you* have that particular trick. Any questions up to this point? All right.

18. DON'T TELL THE CUSTOMER THAT YOU JUST TURNED A TRICK WHETHER YOU HAVE OR NOT.

"As soon as you've admitted you just turned a trick, the John loses his *enthusiasm*. You may not think so but I've seen it happen every time. And then *nobody* gets called again. Use your heads—*both* of them.

19. THE TENANTS ARE OFF LIMITS.

"The tenants in my building needn't know, nor learn, what's going on here. Plenty of them come in here and you've met some of them. You know how they bob in and out of this place. They all think I give lessons in the social graces and personal care, color co-ordination and private accessory improvements. And they think all these old men come up here for self-improvement courses. That's what they think and we'll all stick to that

same story. Now, how about coffee refills for everybody, Doug? Roy, light me a cigarette, Honey, will you?"

"In closing this business meeting, I'd like to leave one thought in mind. I want *all* of you to stay just as sweet as you are."

Business boomed, phones rang. More ads went in. Boys came and went. I fired those who broke the rules. Now I started fixing up the apartment, adding more elegant furniture. I bought a bar and some stools and stocked the bar with everything anyone would want so that customers could be "relaxed" after they arrived.

I bought a large supply of new towels for the boys. I put in a new "work bench," a pair of matching satin couches, picked up some Judy Garland records and got a copy of the "Sabre Dance."

I had a sign made for the door: WILL RETURN. PLEASE WAIT. Everyone soon learned when the sign was put on the door it meant I was busy and company was taboo. The boys left extra clothing at the apartment—swim suits, slack clothes, and especially suits, for their hotel dates.

I kept holding court every day. Yes, I was certainly getting plenty of repeats and compliments.

I made a date book and a file for the address and phone numbers and added a bulletin board for pictures of the boys, with their "given" names below each photo. My aunt made six lovely robes for me which were very convenient since I seldom left the apartment, again.

When tricks used the "studio", I camped in the kitchen with its desk and extension telephones. Several of the boys had been in the interior decoration field and were shopping in antique stores for me. They were forever buying more gilded mirrors and toss pillows for the place. It looked marvelous, with its Victorian touches.

The boys all vied to stay in my good graces. They took turns at doing the marketing, the laundromat scene and making spaghetti dinners for all of us.

I added a special picture collection for customer viewing. Some clients occasionally found props helpful to carry things out.

And in time I added a leather jacket, boots, chains and ropes, in that order. You *never* knew what part you might be called upon to play!

I got business cards made:

SONNY AND HIS BOYS
24-HOUR MASSAGE SERVICE

"Always leave a card," I told the boys.

I got discouraged when some of the boys started calling Johns on their own time, making dates on their own without telling me. They didn't want to give me my "cut". "He's *my* steady customer", they'd tell me when I'd question them about it. Well, mother was *not* to be side-stepped. Some of the boys got fussy. "Oh, I've been with him, and he's so *old!*" They'd hang me up, not keeping appointments, and I got tired of auditioning new boys. So many of the new boys were terrible in bed and it was too much of a hassle having to train them into good manners.

There were two other principal madams in town, for call-boys, who were being hit by the "heat". I had been lucky up to this point. With all the discouragement of undependability, customer complaints of having no *fun* with the boys, boys going out on their own and trying to bump me, I wanted to get out of it.

I'd just sold Doug to a man who wanted to take him along to Europe on a long vacation. Doug was so reliable and such a fine co-worker, it was disheartening. I just wanted to get out from under all of it.

I informed all callers I didn't *have* any boys anymore. I told the remaining boys, "I'm getting out while I'm ahead. I don't want any trouble. Not that I've made any great fortune—not enough, certainly, to retire. It's been a tremendous kick but it's all finished. It's been a *ball!*"

My life collapsed. It was like going into a cocoon. I really didn't know *what* I wanted to do. Many of my afternoons were spent in Griffith Park, thinking. I had become so used to the "easy" life, the phone work, that when I put the whip down I didn't know what to do with myself.

The apartment looked lovely and I was used to spending all of my time there. But it was empty.

When I got too depressed I'd slip out to a foreign film or get some breadsticks and a bottle of wine and listen to my Judy Garland albums.

What I really thought about was how could I not work too hard, make money and still be legitimate? Yes, I wanted to go straight, I mean, legitimate.

Would my past let me go straight?

Having been a stripper myself, I knew how to make G strings, pasties, fringes and panels. I went to a beading shop across the street from the Farmers Market for materials and got some wild supplies and accessories from the Home Silk Shop. I came home and started sewing madly. I made a beautiful sequinned, beaded spider web with a silver spider on a G string crotch. Jennie Lee, Evelyn West, Mickey Dare, and Betty Rowland, all of the famous strippers began to wear my creations. For one I made a formal out of a layer of black net through which you could see her nude body.

My customers worked at the Body Shop, Colony Club, York Club, New Follies Theatre, and the Pink Pussycat.

I took my little attache case, drove to the clubs, and went backstage where the girls would flock around me as I'd show them my little case of goodies. They'd all buy my wares.

Business was good for awhile but then how many G strings does a girl need? I had quite a large share left over.

Then I returned to Chouinard Art School and posed as a nude model for the various art classes. It's great but it doesn't take long to be over-exposed. And you don't work every day.

After I tried that for a while I bought two acres in Ventura County and began raising chickens. The heat wave of September wiped me out and all the chickens died.

I ran an ad in the newspapers, for a roommate, to occupy my time while I was searching for a new career.

With my beauty license in hand, I finally struck up a new career, a unique occupation.

Out went the shingle again.
My business card read:

MR. KENN
SPECIALIST IN PEDICURING AND FOOT MASSAGE

Picking up the phone, I dialed the Times:

"Los Angeles Times? I'd like to run an ad. Yes. I'll give you the wording . . . you have a pencil? O.K. Now, this is it: "Do you want beautiful feet? Young Male Pedicurist."

"Hollywood Reporter? I'd like to have the ad desk, please. Hello? Oh, hello, dear. I'd like to have the \$9.00 an inch ad for one day. That's right, dear. . . . one day. Here's the ad: "Relax and have a pedicure with me. Young Male Pedicurist. Studio or House Calls."

I had *plenty* of towels left over. I went to the beauty supply house and bought cuticle remover, nippers, clippers, emery board, cotton, foot powder, Hexol, peroxide, foot massage lotion, buffer, files and pumice stone. I was in business, again!

My first customer called.

"How much is it?"

"\$7.00 in my studio. Mileage is extra, if you want it done in the privacy of your own home. It's twenty five cents a mile—both ways."

He made an appointment to come to the studio in the late afternoon.

I covered the chaise with a pastel sheet and put a towel across the bottom for his feet and a pillow at his back. At the foot, for me to sit on, I placed my needlepointed footstool.

I placed the supply tray on an alabaster stand, next to me.

We chatted a few minutes and I said, "I'll put a sign on the door so we'll have *complete* privacy." That was old hat to me because I was so used to private entertaining! I closed the door gently and checked the lock.

"If you'd like to remove your shoes and socks, I'll get some warm water for *our* pedicure."

I poured the water into a little green plastic basin and brought it in. "Would you like to roll your trouser legs up or remove them so they won't get wrinkled?"

As he removed his trousers he said, "I hope it won't bother you, I have no shorts on. . . ."

"Well, heavens, no—we're both men!"

I placed them carefully on an upright valet. He settled into the chaise. "We'll put this one in first. Ooooh, we have rather long nails. . . ."

"I've never had a pedicure before. This is my first one." He didn't know it but it was my first, too! He didn't know how I'd bluffed my way through my one and only *manicure* for the State Board!

I put a towel across my lap, took his foot out of the basin and rested it between my thighs, gently patting it dry. He looked down at me with roving eyes as I turned my eyes toward the far corner of the room. I could *see* the handwriting on the wall! A little fuzzy but I could make it out. Sex! Sex was gonna rear its lovely head, again!

"I'm really not as interested in the pedicure as much as a foot massage."

Yeah? I'd already figured *that* out by myself!

"I think I'll have a standing appointment for Wednesday every week," he said.

"Would you like a drink?"

"That'll be nice."

I'd made the Hexol so strong it burned my eyes and I *needed* a drink myself.

"My, you have a lovely apartment. Boy, pedicure business must be good," he commented.

"Well, I've had other interests. You have to work at pedicuring religiously though, like twenty four hours a day, to make headway," I laughed.

He laughed along.

"Well, I do a few other things."

"Oh?"

He arched an eyebrow.

I'd prepared for just such a question. I nodded towards the table. "Yes, there's a price list in that frame on the table, next to you."

The lavender-matted list was in a filigree gold frame. It was leaning against the brass lampbase.

He leaned towards it to read and then picked it up from the table and held it, studying.

Meanwhile I removed the basin of water and put the supply tray off to one side, keeping only the few utensils I needed to finish.

He read it. "My, you're certainly talented."

"Thank you." I finished the pedicure as he drank his Kahlua. He looked around at the lamps.

"Would you *mind* lowering the lights before you massage my feet?" he asked.

"Why not?"

He leaned back. The lights and his eyelids lowered. And I fulfilled his expectations.

As he left he said, "I've missed a lot by not having pedicures. I'm certainly going to have to take better care of my feet."

"Well, come back and see me. Feel free to call me any time. I'm here every day," I told him.

"Can I call *any* time?"

"Well, yes . . . within reason!"

I removed the sign and sat at the bar to count the money. He had been most generous. I put it in the kitty.

Well, we were off and running, again!

Many of the voices that called me were familiar. I recognized them immediately from the call house days. Now I was Ken, the Pedicurist. I checked the files and found their phone numbers matched my massage customers.

When they called to ask for Sonny, I would sometimes forget for a moment and say, "No, he's out right now."

One man called, after having me for a pedicure housecall the week before, and asked, "Will you send a boy over to give a pedicure?"

"This is Ken. What time do you want me to come over?"

FOR MEN ONLY

(in the Studio)

PEDICURE	\$ 7.00
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MANICURE	3.00
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MASSAGES:

Plain Body Massage (30 minutes)	5.00
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Complete deluxe body massage (one hour) ..	10.00
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Scalp treatment, including neck massage ...	3.00
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COMBINATIONS:

Pedicure and Plain Massage	10.00
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Pedicure and Complete Deluxe Massage	15.00
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HAIR STRAIGHTENING	10.00
--------------------------	-------

FACIAL	3.00
--------------	------

HAIR COLOR	5.00
------------------	------

PERMANENT WAVE	10.00
----------------------	-------

TOUPEES, Cleaned and Set	5.00
--------------------------------	------

SHAMPOO	2.00
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DANDRUFF TREATMENT	3.00
--------------------------	------

BEARD AND EYEBROW TRIM	3.00
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All Nail Polish, Extra

(Add double for area housecalls)

(Mileage \$.25—both directions)

"No, not you. You were here last week. I want somebody different to work on my feet."

"Well, I'm the only one here . . ."

"Now . . . you send somebody new each time," he insisted. I hung up.

One of the callers required a full description. I didn't describe myself. I described what I thought he wanted to hear. Then he asked, "Do you give a *complete* pedicure?"

"If you mean by that what I think you mean, you are not interested in a *pedicure*? Do you call up a barber and ask him for a full description before you make an appointment to have your hair cut? Anyway, I'm very particular on whom I work. What do *you* look like?—You dirty old man!" I hung up on him.

Most of them said, "Have you ever been told you have a sexy voice over the telephone?"

"Yes."

Another question was, "How much is a Pedicure?"

"\$7.00."

"You mean, that's *all*?"

"That's all. That's the standard rate, for a *pedicure*."

Or, "Tell me, I've never had a pedicure before. What do you do?"

"I soak the feet. Cut the nail, file the nail, soften the cuticle, scrape and push the cuticle off the toenail, cut the cuticle, file any callouses or hard spots on the bottom of the feet, give a foot massage by hand and with electric vibrator and it takes about an hour."

There was a pause.

"That's all?" he asked.

I was lost for words. Finally, I said, "It's just like getting a manicure, only on your *feet*."

"Well, I'll try it once and see if I like it," he said.

"Do I wear anything special when I get a pedicure?"

"No."

"It won't hurt, will it?"

"No."

"I've never had one before. How often should I get one?"

"That would depend on the condition of your feet."

"Do you work on women's feet, too?"

Disgustedly, I would reply, "There isn't . . . I haven't found a big difference, really, in men and women's feet."

"Would you come over and do my wife's feet as well as mine, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll call you back and make an appointment."

So many of them made the comment, "I could *never* work on people's feet."

"Well, I've done worse," I'd reply.

I found that I had more *young* pedicure customers than in massage work. But from time to time old aunties drifted in. I learned *never* to tilt up the price list until they were inside the apartment. That way I stayed legitimate. For *that* customer. The older ones, when I came to the foot massage, asked, "Do you massage the whole body?"

"No, but I have some friends who do. Shall I *call* one of them?" Out would come the photographs of the boys and up came the receiver to the ear. Over came the boy.

Fortunately I hadn't buried the photos too deeply in a drawer. "You're gonna like this boy. He's an absolute doll. And he even gives a good massage!"

Oh, oh, I thought, I've found a new angle. And licensed, too!

I called up all the boys. I'd missed their phone calls, because they had always checked in every day. I said to them, "Stand by. I'm giving pedicures. It takes me an hour to give one. I can feel out the John in that length of time to see if he's okay. How long will it take you to get over when I call?"

They really didn't want *pedicures*. They still wanted that same old thing—sex!

Many times appointments would overlap. One night Chuck was giving a massage in the bedroom as I was doing a pedicure in the living room. We both had to rush because a customer was due in half an hour. And most clients turned into massage customers.

My personal friends ceased coming to visit because, even

though the lights were on, the sign was out: "Will return—Please wait."

The tenants, knowing I'd had an answering service and the message service which they thought was a personal grooming course, learned I now had a specialized Pedicure Service and *that*, too, seemed legitimate enough.

But I just couldn't get away from being Mr. Madam. I gave so many pedicures and was getting good at giving them I felt I was really professional. I didn't *want* to go to bed with them anymore.

The weeks turned to months. I was buying stocks. I subscribed to and was reading the Wall Street Journal and the Barron News. I had been meeting interesting business people while pedicuring but it forever turned to sex.

Since most of the work was afternoons and evenings up until dawn, I slept in—mornings. Usually, I *never* answered the door because no one came without an appointment. I never took "street traffic" appointments.

There was a knock on the door.

Groggily, I got out of bed, pulling on a floor-length red velvet robe, and opened the little peep-hole which was about an inch smaller than any of the better glory holes at the Hollywood Racetrack.

He was attractive.

"Kenneth?"

I thought it was an old client or he wouldn't call me by my first name, and I'd seen so many faces lately I could hardly remember them all. I didn't know if it was his back bothering him or his feet.

I opened the door.

He showed me his credentials.

"Sheriff's Department."

Then he asked, "Are you Kenneth Marlowe?"

"Oh, yes. Do come in and have a chair. You must be the man from the West Hollywood Sheriff's Department, here about that rape I saw."

He listened attentively.

"You saw a rape?"

"Yes," I said. "The girl next door was coming home about three o'clock in the morning and this man tried to seduce her, between the buildings, near the patio of the next apartment building. Just north of us. I had been up late having coffee with a friend who'd dropped in—late, oh, about three, when we heard this scream. It was terrible."

I was on, dramatically explaining and he listened rather stoically.

"With this . . . well, I thought it was a purse snatcher, and I ran out of my apartment and into the front—out in front of the building. I saw this man, running down the street. He got into a white, panel truck and drove away, past me. However—I got the name of the firm painted on the side panel, and the license number."

He just sat there.

"I'm very liberal but I don't go for scenes like that!" I explained.

"Well, really, that's not what I'm here about."

With that he reached into the top pocket of his suitcoat and said, "I have a warrant for your arrest."

I was *afraid* to ask.

I quietly, calmly managed to ask, "What's the charge?"

He said, "Jaywalking."

"Jaywalking?"

"You'll have to dress and come with me."

"Well, can't I just pay it?"

"You'll have to come with me to downtown Los Angeles and take care of it."

I left and went into the bathroom. He followed me in.

I said, "There're no doors in here."

"I can't permit you to shave. You might kill yourself."

I became confused. I thought about shaving, brushing my teeth, combing my hair. But all I did was splash cold water on my now wide-awake face and wipe it off with one of the large, thick purple towels. I went into the dressing room.

He stood there and watched me disrobe and dress. I wondered,

for a moment, what to wear. Sneakers, cords and my sweater . . . no! I want to look a little butch.

I put on my tan corduroy trousers, my black boots, a smart, plaid sport shirt, and my black leather jacket.

"I'll have to frisk you."

"For *what*?"

"To see if you have any weapons on you."

So with this he got a free feel and he certainly *lingered* in the appropriate places. I couldn't imagine what I could be hiding *there*. And after *all*, he'd *watched* me dress.

"Would you like a cup of coffee?" I asked politely.

"No."

I walked into the living room toward the bar. I saw him follow just a step behind me.

"Could I make a phone call?"

He wasn't about to permit it, his eyes not leaving me for a second because, after all, I was a *dangerous* criminal; but he didn't stop me as I picked up the receiver and dialed a number from a card laying on the top of the bar.

"Hello? Marshall Bail Bonds? This is Ken Marlowe. I've been *busted*! Oh, *no*! . . . for jaywalking! Yes, he's here in my apartment now and he's taking me to . . . where did you say you're taking me?"

I handed the man the phone and he told Marshall where I would be.

The ride to the Los Angeles County Jail was quiet. All the while his eyes were on me, every second, even as we drove down the busy Freeway.

At the Parking Lot he said to the Security Guard, "Bringing in a prisoner." He took me into an office to sign some papers and forms.

I kept feeling there *had* to be more to it than *this*. They knew something I didn't. It was too pat. I couldn't even *remember* the jaywalking ticket. I'd had a number of them over the years, but when was the last one?

He collected a group of papers in the office and we went to a large iron gate with a sign that read:

RECEIVING PRISONERS

He rang a buzzer, just like they did at Orleans Street.

The Gate opened.

There was a little window in an iron door. He showed his credentials, holding them up to the window. We were let in.

Another officer, uniformed, approached me, carrying a manila envelope, 5x7, and a smaller envelope.

"Put your watch and ring and valuables in the smaller envelope and seal it. Put it and anything else inside the large envelope and hold it."

There was a celldoor which he opened and pointed for me to go in. I was all alone, inside. On the far side of the cell was another door.

In about thirty minutes it opened and I was told to come out through it. Another officer took the envelope from me. He took my nearly full package of cigarettes and threw it into a trash-basket.

He sealed the envelope.

"Don't open this up." He told me if I did I would spend ten days in the hole.

I was ushered into a larger open cell which had about eighty men in it, milling around. I waited there for two and a half hours. Finally, my name was called.

I was told to go up to a window. A man at a typewriter wrote down all the information as I replied to his questions. My name, age, occupation.

I didn't feel "male madam" would *go over* well. I didn't *have* to tell them anything but I thought "writer" couldn't matter much.

"I'm a free lance writer," I said, "Modern Romance!"

When he finished, I was told I could make one phone call. I had already called my bondsman so I decided to call my aunt and ask her how she was feeling. She hadn't been too well.

I didn't tell her where I was because I was *sure* my bondsman was going to get me out. The only thing I did say was for her to

watch "Secret Storm" as I was "out" and would probably miss it, today.

I was shown into another room where I waited for another hour. I was taken to still another room to be x-rayed, to see if I had tuberculosis.

Then they gave me a number and took my picture, in various poses. One forward and then a nice profile shot.

The officer taking the pictures thought he was a real comedian. He continually made remarks as he took pictures of the prisoners.

"This looks like Senior Citizen's Day."

"All right, wipe that smile off your face, this ain't Hollywood, Tyrone."

"Okay, sit up straight in that chair, you want everybody to think you're a wino?"

"You got a problem or something?"

To this last, a prisoner answered, "Yes, that's why I'm here. I'm getting it solved."

They fingerprinted me. Fourteen times. *Everything* was done in *multiple* copies. I was then ushered into another large chamber where I sat for three hours more.

I kept wondering where my bondsman was. But I found out from one of the others, a man sitting next to me who was in for murder, that you can't get bail until you've been "booked".

A door on the other side of the room opened and an officer came in with strands of handcuffs. We were handcuffed together in groups of four. I made sure I was handcuffed to a couple of beauties. I didn't want to be going around with a group of winos. Two of the men to whom I was handcuffed had just been caught robbing one of the branches of the Bank of America. They were called the "Mutt and Jeff" bandits.

We were taken by elevator to the thirteenth floor where they marched us around to a counter. A man passed out bologna sandwiches and cups of black coffee.

A young kid, in for stealing a Corvette, who'd been in there before, said to me, "Eat slow . . . this is all you're going to get until five o'clock in the morning."

"You mean they get us up at five o'clock?"

Where is my bondsman?, I wondered.

They removed the handcuffs before we ate. I stepped up to the desk and asked if there was a release for me yet.

"What's your name?"

He looked. "No, there's nothing for you."

One of the trustees came around with wristbands stating our names and numbers . . . just like in the hospital.

They handed me a cardboard with a number on it and a large safety pin. Oh, just like the Harvest Moon Ball! We were told to pin it to our coats and write the description of our pants on it.

Another trustee and several officers came over.

"All right. Take off everything. . . . Put your clothes in the middle and your shoes on each side. . . . Take a hanger and put your coat and your pants on it. . . . Walk over there and get in a line . . . Up against the wall . . . Put your hands out . . . Straight! . . . Palms up! . . . Turn 'em over . . . Make a fist . . . Put your hands over your head . . . Look to the left . . . Look to the right . . . Open up your mouth and wiggle your tongue . . . Now, lift your dick . . . Now your balls . . . Turn around and face the wall . . . Lift your right foot . . . Your *right* foot . . . Now your left foot . . . Bend over and spread your cheeks . . . Wider!"

I said to the man next to me, "What are we doing *this* for?"

"They're looking for marijuana."

"Oh!"

"Pick up a towel. . . . Take a shower. . . . Wash your hair, too. . . . *Don't* step *over* that! . . . Step *in* that disinfectant."

It was vile looking, filled with every kind of filth. It was at that moment I wished I could walk on water.

Half of the showers didn't work. When I finally got one to work, it was ice-cold water. And Ivory Soap. Well, at least there was *that*!

With this I descended from the shower.

"Raise your arms."

I was sprayed with a pumpgun sprayer like we used for disinfecting cattle thirty years ago.

"Turn around and bend over."

He sprayed all that, too.

Someone pointed me to the clothing counter. A trustee was handing out clothing.

He said, "What size do you wear?"

"Small," I said.

"*What* size is *that*?"

"What's the smallest you have?"

"28."

I said, "I'll take a 28, with a 14 shirt."

He gave me a set of blue denims with seven monograms of LOS ANGELES COUNTY JAIL all over it. I was *very* aware of where I *was*.

Then another trustee, wearing gloves, brought my underwear from where the clothing we'd removed had been stacked.

Meanwhile I was busy, checking baskets.

After dressing we were ushered into another room. We waited another hour.

At last they called off ten names. Mine was among them. We went upstairs where they gave blood tests to see if we had a venereal disease. Then they took us to another room and told us to pick up a bedroll.

I wasn't expecting the Hilton but this was ridiculous. Each roll consisted of a dirty, filthy mattress, full of bedbugs, and three blankets. The blankets looked like they'd last been used on Man-O-War, and smelled the same. One of mine smelled strongly of urine.

I had to carry this back to where we had dressed and we waited again.

They called my name again. I picked up the bedroll and walked to the desk. They told me to put the bedroll down and come with them. It was now 9:15 P.M.

I was led down to a room to see my bondsman.

He had been waiting for nearly two hours to see me. He was almost asleep. I told him my sad story.

"How soon can you get me *out* of this place?"

"I couldn't get you out until you were booked and you've just been booked. It will probably take as long to get you out as it

took to get you in." I looked pretty unhappy. I had been brought in and released a few times in connection with raids but this was so unlike the jails in New Orleans or Chicago. This was a monstrous, frightening place. I just didn't want to "stick around" too long.

"Just relax. You'll be out soon," he told me.

I went back upstairs. I waited until a quarter of twelve before they gave me a cell.

They took me to a cellblock on the thirteenth floor. My name was already on the block roster, outside. An officer opened the iron gate.

The cells were all filled, three to a two-man cell, and men were lined up on mattresses all the way up and down the inner corridors.

I spread my mattress down in the corridor, practically on top of the Sergeant's desk. I felt kind of lost.

Everyone was asleep except for three guys in a cell right in front of me. They were still "visiting". They were having a spirited discussion on intercourse with animals. It seems one of them, a young farmer, set himself up as an authority on the matter.

I thought I was going to be getting out right away so instead of lying down on the mattress, I decided to sit up. I sat down and leaned against the bars.

A nineteen year old Spanish American boy in the next cell asked if I would like a cigarette. I smoked several packs a day and hadn't had one for twelve hours. I'll do anything for a cigarette! And anyway, he's warm and breathing!

He gave me a cigarette and a match.

"Where do you live," he asked.

"I live near the Sunset Strip."

"I never heard of it."

"You must be new in town?"

"Naw, I lived here awhile," he replied.

I was on one side of the bars and he was inside the cell.

He said, "Can I ask you a question without you getting mad?"

I closed my eyes and put my tongue in my cheek because I knew *exactly* what he was going to ask.

"Are you a homosexual?"

"That's not what I'm in for," I smiled sweetly. "This cigarette certainly tastes good."

"You won't be able to buy any until tomorrow so you can help yourself to mine."

Uh-hummmmm. This is going to cost me, I knew, right then and there.

There were some books stacked at the corner inside of his cell. "Are those yours?" I asked.

"No, I got them at the library."

"Well, if I can't sleep, maybe I can read one of them. Would you mind?"

"No! Help yourself."

I had my *choice* of four westerns. I chose "Horse Heaven Hill" by Zane Grey. I opened up to the first page to be interrupted by him saying, "Do you know I been in here four months?"

Huummmmm, *shades* of the stockade.

He said, "The Sergeant checks all the cells and he's gone now for twenty minutes. And everybody's asleep. Come on! Move you mattress over here, closer to the door."

He pulled it out, very erect, and stuck it through the bars.

"Holy God, kid, look out! Everybody's *not* asleep," I whispered at him.

"Oh, it's alright."

"No, it *isn't* alright."

I'd heard footsteps and the rattling of keys. With this he quickly handed me a cigarette.

"May I have a light?" I asked, loudly enough, as the Sergeant's flashlight touched us.

"*You*, turn around and put your head up *this* way," he commanded.

I did, taking a long drag on my cigarette.

As soon as the Sergeant was again out of the way he tried insistingly.

"Come on. It's all right!"

I thought, "Oh, for Chrissakes, let's get it *over* with, and I can get some *rest*!"

I slid the mattress back against the bars and laid on it, quite flat except for my raised head. My movements were slow but noiseless.

This wasn't my "studio" and at a time like this, I told myself, one must be very careful. *That, or completely out of your mind!*

He laid another cigarette on the edge just in case.

When we finished I heard the rattling again, grabbed for the cigarette, and opened the book. I could hardly see by the dim light. But it was *something* to do.

I was really afraid of what might happen in the morning if he talked, and I leaned over to tell him. I didn't want a repeat of all that pursuit!

"You *won't* say anything about this to anyone, will you?"

"Oh, no!" he assured me.

"Well, I've been in these places before and when the inmates haven't had a girl for a long time they *bug you to death*, and really, that would only ruin it, for *you*."

I leaned closer, "So, this will just be *our* little secret!" I whispered coyly.

"Okay, I'll see you in the morning." He smiled. "And I'll get ya some cigarettes."

About a half hour later he was sound asleep.

The cell block door opened and my name was called. I looked back over my shoulders and wondered, "Would he look long for me?"

I marched down through the corridors, carrying the bedroll, and returned through many of the rooms I'd been in, earlier. I went through the whole process, in reverse.

It took two hours.

I was out.

I walked two blocks to where I could get a cab back to the apartment, borrowing cigarettes from the cabbie. Well, that was a day shot to hell.

Several of the neighbors were up waiting for me. It was five o'clock in the morning. One of them had signed the bonding papers. They fixed breakfast of coffee and hot dogs. Another form of bologna.

"They got you on *jaywalking*?"

"Well, yes, Darling. I was going right down the middle of the road. It was five o'clock in the morning and they came honking behind me.

"'You! Hey, you!' I didn't turn around because I didn't know what the hell it was. It could have been some young punk and I wasn't looking for trouble! Then all of a sudden there was a damned blinking red light. Well, I stopped!

"So after taking the ticket I put it in a drawer somewhere and *forgot about it*. Completely!"

Dawn was rushing up all over the sky. I returned to my apartment and went to bed. It had been a rather *strenuous* day.

In the morning I did a lot of thinking. I wanted *out*. I just wanted out!! I'd tried going legit before, but this time it had to be final, before I *really* got busted.

The phone rang occasionally. But it became more infrequent when clients realized I *meant* it. I was *definitely* finished.

Pedicuring had become the same old rut, sex. There had to be more to my life than just *sex*.

When the phone rang the voice would ask, "Do you have a boy to send over right away?"

"No, I don't have any, anymore!" It became an automatic reply.

I decided to move. I found a small house in the Santa Monica mountains. It was just the size I wanted. And it was comfortable.

The tenants threw a farewell party for me. One of them asked, "What in the world are you going to be doing in your new place?"

"I'm going to go into private business," I said. "I've had a wonderful offer."

To my "friends" I bluntly stated the facts.

"It's *over*. It's done with! I have no more *work* for any of you.

I've had a wonderful offer for a *legitimate* private business, with just a few big people. And that's what I'm going to do. The big people happen to be *women*. And if *they* try to make me, well, I can always handle *that*. After all, what could we *possibly do* together? I'm a virgin!"

Darling, I Haven't a Thing to Wear

IT WAS so different, puttering in the garden, cooking, and Wednesday night bridge club. Now I grow my own plants instead of getting them from the florist. I have a hobby of growing potted herbs: dill weed, basil, peppermint, rosemary, chives.

It was peace of mind.

One of my former callhouse clients, a married producer whom I serviced, owed me a favor. It was through him I styled hair for two films, for which he gave me some phone numbers of actresses to call.

The girls from the various plays and films started calling me to do their hairstyling again. I'd been away from hairdressing for quite a while but perhaps it was the *answer*.

I had to return to a healthy, self-respectable environment. My will-power was strong and I was through with all the sex involvement. I'd had it—up to *here*.

I'd been up to my neck with a lot of things over many, many years but this was just about the top of the mountain.

This time my shingle would go with me as my new service was private house to house celebrity coiffures.

I would need equipment. I bought a station wagon, air-conditioned dryer, portable sink, and two suitcases full of beauty supplies. I was ready for business.

My using the contacts made through the producer was a legitimate form of blackmail. I knew so much about so many people, I could have become a multi-millionaire if I wanted to be completely foul.

But I made up my mind, immediately, that everything in the past was best forgotten. And I determined that time would erase

from my mind all but the fact that many of the people I'd come to know are *nice people*, regardless of their sexual aberrations and activities.

It's difficult to get personal phone numbers of celebrities, even if *you* are one, and the reasons are perfectly obvious.

Celebrities have little enough privacy without freely distributing their telephone numbers. Therefore, these numbers are closely guarded, not only by the stars, but by their few friends who might be entrusted with the numbers.

The producer gave me a few celebrity phone numbers and I called to offer my services as a private hair stylist. Not all of them accepted the offer.

Those who did were very pleasant and friendly once they got to know me. Those who didn't were blunt in stating they didn't want to be bothered on the telephone by people they didn't know.

You occasionally have to *make* opportunity happen, and this is what I did. Some people in the acting field have succeeded in the same way, using sex. Many of the pretty boys got their start through the casting couch.

It's something that works for both sexes. Naive people think this sex business works only with starlets of the feminine gender.

It's a method of *advancing* oneself to the next plateau. Secretaries in offices have found it often works there, too. It's an old, tried-and-true routine.

Sex became the instrument for furthering my career by using the contacts I had made during my callhouse days. If it hadn't been for "sex" I probably would not have become a leading, respected hair stylist.

In the callhouse sex-game all you needed were two or three people with contacts to start out. When you won their confidence you could advance to their friends. Often their friends, whose names mean nothing to you or the public, tried us and if they enjoyed us, passed us on to the big names.

I felt the same thing could and would work with hairstyling. I was finished with sex for sex's sake. I'd been through everything in the book, and a few things nobody ever put on paper, and I was completely fed up with the whole three letter word!

I knew that if a few "friends" of celebrities could be convinced I was a *good* coiffeur it would mean that my next goal would be reached. It would be like a chain reaction.

I became known, in a short time, to dozens of female celebrities. They had me styling their hair on housecalls, television studio calls, and in theatre dressing rooms for plays.

None of them knew anything of my past. And I wasn't about to tell them. They never volunteered any information about their past lives and I wasn't about to reveal mine. Neither of us pried into the other's affairs. I wasn't living a lie. It just wasn't discussed. Besides, I was now proud to be a private celebrity stylist for people whom I came to regard as personal friends.

Most often, I went to their homes and set up *shop* for their convenience. They didn't *have* to appear in public before they were ready, or to bother dressing like the "star", and they could continue whatever they'd been doing while I did their hair.

This included a range of things. Some of them dictated fan mail replies and other correspondence to their secretaries, some visited with friends or family members, some were reading books, scripts, or memorizing, returning phone calls, and babysitting with the grandchildren.

One of them stopped, in the middle of a "set", wrapped a towel around her hair and put a bandana over it.

"Come along, sweets," she said, "we're gonna go to the market."

We hopped into her gold Rolls Royce and drove down to Carl's Market in Beverly Hills, to pick up some more mason jars. She was in the middle of canning her fig-and-boysenberry jam for a Christmas present to Hedda Hopper.

This all became satisfying enough for me. I didn't mind being in the wings. The *glow* touched me. When I worked plays, and even in their homes, I was introduced to the famous stars who dropped in to say hello, to congratulate them, or just "chew the fat".

I did the hair, every night for a famous television and film star, during the long run of "The Thurber Carnival" at the Huntington Hartford Theatre in Hollywood. She was one of the nicest people I'd ever known.

Between acts I massaged her neck, shoulders, and feet, and she'd collapse into a bundle of bliss. It's not *all* hairdressing when you're doing private styling.

There are many personal touches. I ran errands, took phone messages, ran out to get snacks, and even walked the dog.

One evening I took her big, black, standard poodle for his walk, between intermissions. There was a man looking at the items in a jewelry-store window and just then the dog lifted his leg and relieved himself on the man's trousers.

When I noticed what was happening I gave the leash a *yank*. "Com'n boy, I think I hear your mother calling!" We *flew* back to the stagedoor as fast as we could run.

The funny thing about the run of the play was I didn't have to make her hair-dos too lovely, because, being a comedienne, she was *supposed* to look tousled. One evening, just before curtain, her husband said, "Muss it up a bit—it's too *pretty*!"

One of my favorite customers was the ex-wife of a deceased star who had helped build a television series into one of the biggest production companies in the business. And she was such a down-to-earth personality it always gave me a personal *lift* just being around her.

Once, she called to have me over to clip an ingrown toenail so she could get into her pointed pumps to attend a Ball for which she was the chairman.

Some of my customers weren't stars themselves but were wives of top male stars, and just as important in the Hollywood hierarchy.

Some were nice and some were quite aware of where marriage had placed them, statuswise.

Many a time, the problem of divorce became a business hazard for me. I couldn't talk about one celebrity to another celebrity until I was quite sure they had never been related or had any intentions of being related.

One of my customer's ex-husbands became the current husband of another customer, an Academy Award winner. The business of being tight-lipped was a professional necessity.

The only bad thing about private styling was that my cus-

tomers were always on the go. They went to Europe, to New York, or on the road. They'd call me when they were in town but some times there were long periods when I had time on my hands. During their personal appearance tours it was often a month or two before I'd see some of them again.

I continually had to work at gaining new customers. Because of the price range I had to charge for my services, this wasn't always easy.

I looked around for additional clients and asked current clients to refer me. I put my business cards in mail boxes at prominent addresses, and wrote letters to other celebrities I wanted to coiffure.

One of the places I wrote to was a private sanitarium, at the suggestion of one of my customers who'd been there. It was an expensive, exclusive, private sanitarium for alcoholics.

After they received my letter, I got a call from the doctor who operated the establishment and went in for an interview.

He thought the therapeutic value of my doing women's hair was a wonderful idea. And I would receive my gratuities directly from the patients.

The class of people consisted of socialites, film stars, and business executives. The cheaper drinkers who couldn't afford such care wound up on Skid Row.

I did the Head Nurse's hair for gratis. She was a very forceful personality, and would have made a fine prison matron. She hated alcoholics and wealthy women, "but the money here is good," she said.

"Alcoholism is finally being recognized as the coming problem which must be taken care of in the medical world today. It's almost to the point of being an incurable disease," the doctor told me.

I talked to hundreds of patients and came to know and love many of them. I felt *needed* even though, in many instances, the work was difficult and heart-breaking.

I soon learned their problems and fears. Most of the male patients fell into specific categories. They were either dominated by their wives or mothers or had lost the respect of their children

or families. The disappointment was more than they could take. Social drinking had become an escape from reality.

For the women the reasons were sometimes different. The majority who talked to me about their "problems" said they drank because their husbands were animal-like in bed, satisfying only themselves, then falling asleep. They were unsure of the love of their husbands and couldn't mold their husbands into the pattern they'd tried to make of them.

Many of the women drank because they had too much money and too much time on their hands. They really had nothing to *do* and drinking filled up the time.

Many nights I found myself sitting up all night when a sanitarium client, now at home, called *me*. I'd go over and talk them out of getting drunk, and very often, out of suicide.

At ten after three one morning my phone rang. It was one of the patients. She was depressed, drunk, and said the liquor stores were closed. Would I bring over a bottle? She offered me twenty dollars for one. I drove to her home, a lush mansion in the Los Feliz district, and found the house wide open. I searched through it and found her in the den, prostrate, unable to get up.

I helped her into her bedroom.

"Where's the bottle?" she screamed. "You *said* you were gonna bring the bottle!!"

"You don't *need* a drink. You need some rest. You promised me you weren't going to drink any more," I told her firmly.

I phoned a private nurse I knew, asking her to come immediately. While waiting for her to arrive, I reasoned with the woman, trying to get her calmed, explaining how *bad* the liquor made her look. I told her nobody had respect for her and she'd only find happiness if she'd give of herself to others.

A month later, at a still early age, she was dead of cirrhosis of the liver.

But the work gave me a lift, feeling needed. Even if it was only a glorified form of baby-sitting. I was happy, really happy, deep down inside.

At the hospital, I encountered every type of personality. There was the over-sexed wife who began pursuing other patients. She

made repeated overtures to me but I set her straight by bluntly telling her I was not the "man" she *thought* I was.

One of the patients she singled out was a latent homosexual who was dominated by his mother. She'd chase him all over the hospital. But it was a lost cause!

Money and clothing were taken from the patients when they were admitted, but as they became "trustees", they were allowed to keep a few dollars for "expenses".

There were no bars on the windows of trustees' rooms.

Two ladies were quartered in one of the trustee rooms. Instead of a hospital gown, one of them wore a duster, and she stole money from her roommate, another trustee.

She went out the window and found a liquor store, bought a pint and came back. After a couple of snorts she got up enough nerve to tell the other woman she'd stolen her money.

But when the first woman found out what she'd used it for, she said, "Here's some more money. Go get us another one!" They got plastered, *together*.

Many times patients would beg me to go out and bring back liquor for them. Long ago I had stopped going to bars and rarely went to liquor stores, having things delivered to the house when I needed them. I would *not* go "shopping" for the patients.

One patient's boyfriend came in to visit her. He was stoned! She yelled at him, "Get out of here before the doctors see you. They'll lock *you* up!"

The patients received antabuse treatments, lecture treatments, various therapy treatments, and were "dried out". Many of them returned, again and again.

At first I was surprised at some of the famous faces I saw, but began to understand their problems and I appreciated being able to work with them.

Many of them were sent on to private psychiatric care elsewhere, and I continued to do their hair. Some, due to their drinking, died of liver complications. In the course of one year I lost eight clients.

They were brought to the hospital in ambulances, police cars, and private automobiles. And many times, in straight jackets.

But the treatments, including my hair and beauty care, brought many of these people back to a degree of normalcy.

My clients had rapidly increased in number and I was as busy as I wanted to be, or could personally handle.

That well known day arrived again, Hallowe'en. I hadn't been to one of the drag parties for years. I'd had enough night life and partying, working at the different clubs over all the years.

People called me all week long to go. It was the biggest social event of the season, they said. They came over borrowing my old wardrobe.

I belonged to a very large, private gay club that was sponsoring the Ball in Bell, California. The boys came over to ask my advice, have me set their wigs and give them make-up hints. *Begging* me to go, they persisted but I firmly said, "No!"

On the Saturday afternoon of the Ball, while I was doing one of my celebrity's hair, I told her about the drag ball.

"When I had my home in New York," she said, "the boys came over and borrowed clothes and everybody went and had a *ball!*" she Cheshired at me.

"Well, I really don't *have* anything to wear. I've loaned everything out. And some of the boys have been sewing on their drags for months. You know, the bitches only get out once a year and they go out of their freaking *minds*," I told her.

She winced. "Oh, Honey, why don't you kick up your heels for once! You *need* a change."

"I just don't have anything to wear!"

"Well, let's go upstairs to my storage room. I *might* have something you could use. However, I don't know . . . I'm much taller than you."

We looked around. There were hundreds of gowns of every variety and description imaginable. She thumbed through the hangers.

"I know . . . I have this pink rhinestone buglebeaded Roaring Twenties number I wore when I was doing the roadshow of 'Auntie Mame' . . . maybe *that* would fit you."

She found it and handled it to me.

"Try it on!"

It didn't look bad. Awfully flat-chested, I thought.

"Oh, it's mad! You'll have a *ball* in that," she exclaimed. "You won't be the most glamorous, but you'll have *fun*!"

"Well, I've passed the stage of going as a glamour queen," I told her.

On the way home I drove by Logan's Costume Company.

Winnie! I wonder what Winnie has left? Everybody's *been* there.

She looked at the dress. "I like it . . . it's *you*! But it needs a few feathers." She thought a minute.

"I have *just* the thing to go with it!"

Out came a beaded bag, a three tiered dusty-rose marabou stole, and a wide-brimmed, floppy, buckram garden hat, festooned with nearly a dozen assorted old roses, forget-me-nots and poppies hanging in various stages of disarray. It was "finished" with a wild kind of feather that went nowhere, at an angle, on top.

But the hour was getting late so I flew home and started getting ready.

Slapping on the greasepaint and powder, heavy on the eyeshadow, I put large dangling earrings on and rolled my hose to my knees. My wig hadn't been set as it had remained in the bottom of the trunk for years. I put it on, anyway, and teased around the face. I opened up the beaded bag, threw in twenty dollars, my identification, my driver's license and my housekeys, picked up my blue ostrich feather fan and flew out to the car. The whole ensemble took about an hour.

I'd called Gabe, a new *acquaintance*, while I was at the costume company, telling him to be ready by eight o'clock, and I drove over to pick him up. He was "Mark Anthony".

It was a long, hour's drive to Bell.

The theme of the Ball was to come as either a movie star, a movie title, or something to do with the industry.

Upon arrival, the President of the club, who was taking tickets, said, "And *who* are *you*?"

"Who do you *think* I am?" I threw back.

"My God, you *look* like Vivien Leigh!"

"How did you *know*? From 'Streetcar Named Desire!'"

The more encouragement I had, the more I camped. God, it *had* been years.

I kept screaming, "*This isn't my dress!*"

But I made the table-rounds and *complained* to everyone that I was "looking for Marlon because he *raped* me! And my boyfriend's a *homosexual*. I caught him in *bed* with his *lover*! And *I'm a nymphomaniac*, would you *believe* it?"

I had to keep in character as I fluttered my two inch false lashes, flipped out my ostrich fan, and twirled my beaded bag.

As I moved around, I asked, "And who are *you* supposed to be?" Then I spotted a group of friends. "Why, of *course*, I'd know you *anywhere*, Scarlet. And where's Aunt Pittipat? Oh, there she is! Yooo hoo, Auntie! Oh, there's Melanie. My word, it looks like the whole Barbecue at Twelve Oaks is here!"

There were nearly a thousand people crowded into the Hall. About four hundred of them were in costume.

There were five Marilyn Monroes, two Marilyn Maxwells, Seven Brides, with Two Brothers, three Mae Wests, in red velvet, eighteen Elizabeth Taylors—two from "Cleopatra" and sixteen from the "VIPs". The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were there. And Judy Garland, the Wicked Witch from the South, with her roommate, the Good Fairy, and Tonto, who was asked to leave due to indecent exposure.

His authentic costume consisted of a feathered headdress, and a very *small* feather posing strap. There were two others in posing straps and a mess of chains—whatever that was supposed to be; Vampira, the Sheriff of High Noon, and the Sheriff of Cochise in rhinestoned levis, and a host of others.

At eleven, the orchestra stopped playing and they announced that all contestants should get a number for the judging. I hadn't planned to be a contestant, but I had been alone, so I thought, "What the Hell!"

My "Antony" had been buzzing around playing Richard Burton, all night. He spent most of his time with Joanne Woodward, "The Stripper." The only time I saw him was when he came by for a drink. Then he'd disappear again.

The judges called for number 80, in the finals. Then they called for everyone to look for "Viv!"

The announcer said, 'Streetcar' Viv, not 'Gone With The Wind,' Viv!"

Everybody seemed to be looking for Viv. "Has anybody seen *Viv*?!"

"Oh, dear, that's me!" I yelled, suddenly. I was in the back of the hall. Getting to the front of the stage made up for all the *years* I had been *out* of drag. By the time I reached the stage, *everyone* in the Hall *knew* I had been *found*.

My competition was Marie Dressler, Marjorie Main, and Tarzan-Jane-Boy-and-Cheeta. Audience applause declared me the winner.

I was handed an envelope containing the cash award. There were only three prizes: Most Humorous, Most Beautiful, and Best Male Attire.

As I came offstage, Gabriel approached me and said, "Joanne's invited *me* to a party, but there's only room for *one* in the car. You wouldn't mind, *would* you?"

"Use your own judgement," I told him, in character.

Again, Life had given me *money* instead of *love* and *affection*!

I repaired to the Ladies Room, to gussy my mascara. "V.I.P."-Liz was just coming out, as I went in. She'd won *Most Beautiful*, and we exchanged congratulations.

"You're the *prettiest*," I told her.

"And you're the *funniest*!" she replied.

I sat between Mae West and Pearl Bailey, in the Powder Room. Mae, in all her glory, was a six foot seven, muscular truck driver.

"Don't cry, Mae. You'll *ruin* that gorgeous red dress. Velvet *stains* easily," I told him. "I went as Lillian Russell one year, and I didn't win a prize. There are just *too many* pretty drags. Try again *next* year!"

"Oh, you don't *know* how *long* I've been working on this costume. I've been sewing for *months*!" he said, dabbing at the tears that were ruining his mascara.

Outside the door I looked around and said, "All those nellie queens in there, *I'm* going in the *Men's* Room!"

But it was just as full of drags.

I'd had it and went to the car and drove home, alone.

It had been a wonderful evening but by going to the Ball I was left with more contempt.

When my phone rings I know it's regarding hair styling and the call's from a legitimate customer. They're very generous with me. I began, for the first time since I could remember, to have a genuine pride in myself, in a profession. All of the years, and the experience, were coming into focus.

I was becoming acceptable, and respectable, and my background wasn't too important. Each week and month, my past began to fade more into a dimness. And I realized that peace of body was *part* of gaining peace of mind.

I moved to a conservative, comfortable house and had acquired good taste through the years.

It is the kind of place where stars can come over and feel comfortable. And many of them drop in for a cocktail, or dinner, or just to say, "Hello." Some of them have gifted me with fine pieces of decor. For the first time I really felt I have a *home*.

There are many friends now, and I've found a level for myself. It wasn't too long ago that Celebrity Service wanted additional information about me on their listing of *me*.

I find my friends and customers are, deep down, just like anyone else. Their world is a small, narrow circle of people. It's like living in a small town in a big city. They all know each other and outsiders are like people from other communities.

In my late thirties, I find myself thinking with the maturity I should have *long ago* acquired. I've become settled, well situated; and when I go out I meet people I know from one walk of life, *or another*. I charge my hair customers enough so that I don't *have* to work too heavily.

Now, I have *time* to think. And I find I don't dislike it.

Good or bad, I often think of the old days. And I wonder about the ones that are to come. Who knows what the future holds for anybody? I've never *really* worried about the future.

It was during one of these moods, recently, that I made an appointment to see "Madame Louise", in North Hollywood.

She advertised herself as a Psychic Reader. She read your palm and the cards and could foretell the future. Well, I thought, *why not?*

Her house was a little frame place on a side street, a very unpretentious-looking building. I waited in the front room, leafing through all the occult magazines. *What* could she really *tell* me? Well, *that* was why I was *there*.

She led me into the kitchen where we sat at the table. She held my right hand in hers and studied it, closely. I waited.

Finally, after a few nods and uh-hummmms, she began.

"You have an *interesting* lifeline. It's *most* unusual. You're going to have good health and a long life. I don't see much sickness. But I do see lots of travel. You've done quit a bit of traveling already, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have."

She smiled, benignly.

"Oh, my!" she exclaimed.

I looked up at her face. Her eyes were wide.

"This line here, this is your work line. It has many forks and canals. You're going to be in many kinds of businesses, and occupations, during your lifetime."

"You're telling *me!*" I said.

"Oh, my goodness, look at *this*. See *this* one? This is the Love Line. See how strong and deep it is. My, and look at all those little forks. You're going to have a very busy love life. Nothing permanent. Oh! Wait, what's this right here? Now, here, it becomes more lasting. This place here shows you are going to focus your love years on one person."

She looked at me.

"It seems you've had a *long search*, for love."

"Yes," I agreed, "That's true, and I'm still searching. Tell me, do I ever find it?"

"Oh, yes! Eventually, you *do* find true love. And you must *realize* that Fate has created these lines, long before your Destiny was established."

"I'm a fatalist at heart," I replied. "I really believe you meet

every person for a *reason*. Every thing you do has a reason why you're doing it!"

"What month were you born?"

"I'm a Sagittarian," I told her.

"That explains some of your lines. Do you believe in the stars?"

"Definitely. I've read lots of books on Astrology. I do believe that's true—what the stars say."

We finished with the usual promises of a new car, travel, true love, adventure and excitement. I was lifted in spirit, and very pleased with my "future".

The future?

Who ever knows what the future brings? The past is finished. The future is for living.

